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**SERMONS IN NOVELS: A HOMILETICAL AND
THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE**

**A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty at
The School of Theology at Claremont**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion**

**by
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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

It is not unusual to find religious themes developed in novels. It is rare, however, to find sermons written into the text of novels. This study examines eight such sermons which appear, in whole or in part, within novels. While particular sermons in novels have been noted by critics, I have found no evidence that, prior to this study, such sermons have been collected and examined critically from a theological and homiletical point of view.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

I propose to examine each of these sermons with reference to a particular definition of the gospel. To do so without being false to the author's total intention and to avoid destroying the integrity of the novel as a whole, I will discuss each sermon in relation with the novel of which it is a part, taking the author's setting and theme seriously. From this study, we should be able to conclude whether, according to one definition of the gospel, the sermons are theologically as well as homiletically instructive.

Importance of the Study

If the church is to speak effectively to the world, it must also listen to the world. The novelist is one voice to which the church may

listen. It is important, however, that the church listen critically, particularly when the novelist adopts an instrument traditionally belonging to the church. Historically, the sermon has been one method by which the church has communicated its message. If the novelist writes sermons, the church may wish to judge whether he has done so responsibly before it takes him seriously.

II. ORGANIZATION

Structure and Method

The study proper begins with Chapter II. There I shall begin with an examination of the first of the eight novels. In each of the succeeding eight chapters I first discuss the novel and state its themes, following which the sermon setting is given, then the full text of the sermon as it appears in the novel, deleting peripheral comments made by the author and inserted in the body of the sermon. I then interpret the sermon stating its themes and comparing or contrasting themes in the novel with those in the sermon. I then proceed to a theological and a homiletical critique. The concluding chapter of the study summarizes the conclusions which may be drawn from the study of these eight sermons.

Matters of Form, Style and Definition

Since the study makes frequent use of a relatively small body of reference material and since the validity of the study rests upon a correct reading of these references, I have placed the sermon within the study proper rather than in an appendix. The sermons will be found set off from the body of the study.

References to particular lines in the sermons appear throughout the study. Rather than citing the bibliographical sources in each case, the footnote refers the reader to the page and line within this study where the reference appears.

Authors differ in their use of punctuation. These variations have presented certain problems with regard to deletions from the sermons. For the sake of clarity, I have used brackets and periods where deletions have been made. Wherever possible, the author's punctuation and spacing have been observed.

The matter of tense has presented particularly difficult problems due to the differing styles of the authors. I have adopted the following rules: (1) in paraphrasing or summarizing the author's statements I have used his tense; (2) in comparing and contrasting statements I have used the present tense wherever possible.

I have repeatedly used one term which may require further explanation. It is the word "theme." The usage here is guided by the definition that a work's theme is the broadest generalization in the work, the generalization which controls all the material which is used.¹ A "good story has meaning--it says something. . . . Harte is trying to tell us, we say, that human virtue is to be found in the most unlikely places and under the most unpromising conditions."² This is Harte's theme.

¹Albert E. Cohen, Writing about Literature (New York: Scott, Foresman, 1963), p. 28. See also p. 144: "Theme is the essential meaning or main concepts of a literary work."

²Cleanth Brooks, Jr., and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Fiction (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1943), pp. 286-358.

III. SOURCES AND LIMITATIONS

Two criteria have guided the selection of novels for this study: (1) that the novel contain a sermon, and (2) that the novel belong, either by major influence or date of publication, to the contemporary period. The eight authors whose work is represented are the only ones my research revealed to have made direct use of sermons. Three of the authors have written more than one sermon into their works. I have chosen the sermon which, in my judgment, offered the most complete text. Selection of the novels is not based upon literary merit.

Critical assessments will be made of the theological content of the sermons. The book Design for Preaching³ is the source of theological criteria. The gospel, as Davis understands it,

. . . is the news of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ our Lord, revealing God's love toward men and his purpose in history, manifesting at once his judgment and his mercy, furnishing a new basis for the relation between men and God--compassion, forgiveness, unmerited favor and help--and calling into being a reconstituted humanity joined with Christ and living no longer by its biological possibilities but by participation in Christ's life.

Stated thus--and its import cannot be stated in lesser terms than these--this gospel is obviously the whole of the Christian faith.⁴

For the purposes of this study I have reduced this statement to five topics:

Redemption. Under the topic of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ our Lord, I am concerned to discover if the sermon either states

³H. Grady Davis, Design for Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958).

⁴Ibid., p. 109.

or develops this central Christian theme and what use is made of it in the sermon.

God's love and purpose. In uniting the themes of love and purpose, Davis understands that human history is important to the gospel. God's love is not personal, in that sense, and separated from his larger will for men. "The whole course of history . . . remains plastic to the will of God,"⁵ and God's love is related to the fulfilling of that purpose. It is not sentimental. To meet this element of the gospel, the sermon must convey a sense of God's purpose in human history and of God's love being extended to men while they assume responsibility in human events.

Judgment and mercy. The place of judgment and mercy in each sermon raises the issue of God's initiative and man's response. Does the sermon proclaim that God's mercy is dependent upon man's activity? Is judgment rendered by God because of rebellion against man's moral codes, or against the Divine purpose? Are these the same? To meet this requirement of the gospel sermon, the hearer must sense that the mercy of God is being extended within his judgment.

Compassion. Davis' full statement about the man-God relationship taught in the gospel is as follows: ". . . a new basis for the relation between men and God--compassion, forgiveness, unmerited favor and help . . ."⁶ I have condensed that statement by reading the ideas of

⁵C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 96.

⁶Davis, op. cit., p. 109.

forgiveness, unmerited favor and help into the single word "compassion." The theme of love, which Davis introduces in connection with God's purpose in history, is commonly used to convey compassion. Davis prefers the latter usage.

The new humanity. The qualities of life pleasing to God is the topic treated under the category which Davis refers to as the new humanity joined with Christ. If the sermon calls for a change in personal character, or points to a hope of man's improvement or the conditions which produce such a change in people, it may be said that the sermon deals with the topic of the new humanity.

Following the theological analysis of gospel content, there is a summary of the sermon. Here I must occasionally refer to its context within the novel. The study of themes in both sermons and novels reveals that the sermon which is removed entirely from its setting may not have the same meaning as one within it. The context may, in fact, deny the surface meaning of the sermon entirely, as we shall see. When this is the case, an entirely new set of problems is raised regarding the author's purpose in writing the novel and hence his use of the sermon. It is not my purpose to pursue that general question in the theological summary of each sermon. I will refer to the author's purpose only so far as it is clear, on the face of it, that the author's purpose forces a further consideration of what the sermon apparently means. The controlling issue is whether the gospel is in fact conveyed in each sermon.

The conclusions which I draw from the study of each sermon are not limited to the statement of the gospel which can be deduced from it.

Here, also, the context of the novel is of great importance in understanding the sermon. My purpose is like that of the art critic who, in evaluating a painting, strives to lay bare the artist's major lines. The artist begins with a sketch in more or less elaborate detail. This provides the skeleton into which the painter will later breathe life. The sermon, also, is fleshed upon a skeleton, its theological framework. I will uncover that framework in the succeeding analyses but the task does not end there. The following lines, descriptive of the artist's work, apply also to this critical task:

Most old masters and many of the best modern painters have made painstaking preparatory studies for their pictures. . . . However bold and simplified the final result may be, clarity of conception distinguishes the masterpiece. Yet clearness and correctness do not make artistic merit.⁷

The sermon which has been stripped to its bare theological bones is no longer a sermon; clarity and precision in its framework are not the only tests of the adequacy of a sermon, any more than the clearness and correctness of a work of art give it artistic merit. While the gospel content and theological framework of the sermon will be discussed with reference to Davis' standards, the homiletical evaluation of the sermon is my own.

⁷H. Ruhemann and E. M. Kemp, The Artist at Work (London: Pulman, 1951), p. 29. Italics mine.

CHAPTER II

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN¹

"Whatever the form in which Baldwin chooses to preach his sermons--novel, essay, play, short story or speech--his message is delivered with a blend of eloquency, bluntness and Biblical wrath . . ."²

Go Tell It on the Mountain is no exception to this judgment. A reading of Baldwin's autobiographical sketches reveals that this novel is the story of his own life, with the exception of the rural interlude in the novel. But the story is not an autobiography; it stands in its own right as a novel.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL

Summary

Gabriel Grimes is a deacon in a negro church in Harlem. He has sternly rejected the world, the flesh and the devil. His life is the church; his goal is heaven and his fear is hell. His family participates in his calling with some unwillingness though the alternatives are all too clear: rejection of Gabriel's harsh demands brings brutal punishment. In Gabriel's mind, to be out of the church is to fall victim to the whores, pimps, petty criminals and racketeers who throng the

¹James Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain (New York: Dell, 1953).

²Fern Narja Eckman, The Furious Passage of James Baldwin (New York: Evans, 1966), p. 15.

streets and alleys of Harlem. Better to suffer parental discipline than burn in hell.

Gabriel does not come easily to divine grace. Behind him is a life of riotous living in the rural south. It is his earnest desire to save his children from the life he once lived. He never refers to that earlier way of life, but it provides the backdrop for his daily decisions. Gabriel is especially concerned for the salvation of his stepson, John, whose long rebellion and final surrender provide the central movement of the novel.

The fury which is Harlem flows through the novel and through the tumultuous life of the Church of the Fire Baptized. The title of the book is ironic, though not cynical. What one is to go and tell on the mountain is that the earnest and fervant quest for a religious answer to our existence is futile.

Themes

Go Tell It on the Mountain is divided into three parts each of which is prefaced with a verse of scripture. These major movements of the novel are defined in the meaning of these verses. Together they develop the single theme that man's best efforts end in despair. The church provides the setting in which this theme is explored. The first of these is given in the novel as follows:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.
And let him that heareth say, Come.
And let him that is athirst come.
And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.³

³Baldwin, op. cit., p. 9. The verse is from Revelation 22:17. Baldwin's arrangement of lines is followed in this quotation and in the two verses which will be quoted subsequently.

These words express the confidence of the Christian community and the hope of sinful man. This is the first movement of Baldwin's hope held out, freely offered. The form of that offer is the church. The church wears two faces: one is the face of the human instruments through which its work is done, the other is the experience of exaltation and release which the church offers to sinful people.

Whether the setting is a revival in the rural south or a storefront church in Harlem, the church is the place where one is to come to receive the water of life. There the sinner may be powerfully converted and lifted out of debauchery⁴ and there one may be sure that his children will be kept from the ways of sin.⁵

The second movement of the novel is expressed in the prefatory verse:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying,
How long, O Lord, holy and true,
dost thou not judge and avenge our blood
on them that dwell on the earth?⁶

The meaning of this verse for the novel is that in the midst of great expectations nothing actually changes; the Lord's people wait and cry, "How long?"

Deacon Grimes and his wife Elizabeth illustrate this movement in the book. Gabriel's conversion lifts him from rebellion and sin and launches his career as a preacher. For a time he is famous, leading great revivals and having his name seen in public advertisements.⁷

⁴Ibid., pp. 206, 207.

⁵Ibid., p. 55.

⁶Ibid., p. 63. Revelation 6:10.

⁷Ibid., p. 50.

However, he falls into sin, fathers a son out of wedlock, refuses to care for or acknowledge the girl or the child. He then moves to Harlem and becomes a faithful deacon in the church. The consequences of Gabriel's compensatory righteousness are felt by his wife, Elizabeth. Her story is one of bitterness and constraint.

The third movement of the novel is found in the text of the sermon preached by Gabriel:

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone;
because I am a man of unclean lips,
and I dwell in the midst of a people
of unclean lips; for mine eyes have
seen the King, the Lord of hosts.⁸

The first movement held out hope; the second spoke of expectations unfulfilled, and the third proclaims the despair of the righteous. John, step-son of Gabriel Grimes, embodies the third movement. The closing section of the novel is devoted to his conversion. This section is the more ironic since John is the only expression of hope within the book.

Uncertain at first that he wants to "love Jesus," John's decision is reluctant and wavering. The first indications of his decision are expressed in a conversation with his mother:

"I know," she said, with a smile, releasing him and rising, "there's a whole lot of things you don't understand. But don't you fret. The Lord'll reveal to you in His own good time everything He wants you to know. You put your faith in the Lord, Johnny, and He'll surely bring you out . . ."

.
Dimly, he felt that he ought to console her, and he listened, astounded, at the words that now fell from his lips: "Yes, Mama. I'm going to try to love the Lord."⁹

⁸ Ibid., p. 191. Isaiah 6:5.

⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

When John made this confession, his mother, rather than expressing delight, expressed sadness ". . . as though she were looking far beyond him at a long, dark road . . ." ¹⁰

John's conversion followed the usual pattern of deep conviction of sin and sudden, glorious release. But within the very experience there is a feeling of uncertainty:

Yet, as he moved among them, their hands touching and tears falling . . . something began to knock in that listening, astonished, new-born and fragile heart of his; something recalling the terrors of the night . . . he knew that he could never tell it--that the heart is a fearful place. ¹¹

The preacher Gabriel, his father, gave John no touch, no kiss of peace and no smile. Gabriel represents the bleakness and sterility of the religious experience which has come to John.

And he felt his father behind him. And he felt the March wind rise, striking through his damp clothes, against his salty body. He turned to face his father--he found himself smiling, but his father did not smile.

They looked at each other a moment. His mother stood in the doorway, in the long shadows of the hall. "I'm ready," John said. "I'm on my way." ¹²

Johnny is indeed on his way, on his way into the black despair which is the daily life of his father and mother. Baldwin appears to be telling us in the novel that man's best experiences, best hopes, end in despair, even in the church where human hopes have their last refuge. ¹³ This is what one must go and tell on the mountain.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 32.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 206, 207.

¹²Ibid., p. 221.

¹³" . . . I knew that all those sermons and tears and all that repentance and rejoicing had changed nothing." James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time (New York: Dell, 1962), p. 51.

II. THE SERMON

Setting

The sermon in Go Tell It on the Mountain is preached by Gabriel Grimes. It is delivered during the period shortly after his conversion when he is seeking to take his place among the recognized evangelists of the rural south. The occasion was "the Twenty-Four Elders Revival Meeting . . . the great occasion of that summer."¹⁴ Gabriel had ". . . only yesterday been lying, vomit-covered, in the gutters of sin."¹⁵ A great lodge hall had been rented for the revival and the service had already begun when the young preacher arrived to take his place among the elders. He was terrified in the presence of these confident men and not at all relieved when they greeted him with: "Just getting these folks warmed up for you, boy. Want to see you make them holler tonight."¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 102.

SERMON I*

1 "'Then said I, Woe is me for I am undone; because I am a man
2 of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean
3 lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'"**

.

4 These words had been uttered by the prophet, Isaiah, who had
5 been called the Eagle-eyed because he had looked down the dark cen-
6 turies and foreseen the birth of Christ. It was Isaiah also who
7 had prophesied that a man should be as a hiding-place from the
8 wind and tempest, Isaiah who had described the way of holiness,
9 saying that the parched ground should become a pool, and the thirsty
10 lands springs of water: the very desert should rejoice, and blossom
11 as the rose. It was Isaiah who had prophesied, saying: "Unto us
12 a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall
13 be upon His shoulder." This was a man whom God had raised in
14 righteousness, whom God had chosen to do many mighty works, yet
15 this man, beholding the vision of God's glory cried out: "Woe is
16 me!"

.

17 There is a lesson for us all in this cry of Isaiah's, a
18 meaning for us all, a hard saying. If we have never cried this
19 cry then we have never known salvation; if we fail to live with
20 this cry, hourly, daily, in the midnight hour, and in the light
21 of the noonday sun, then salvation has left us and our feet have
22 laid hold on Hell. Yes, bless our God forever! When we cease to
23 tremble before Him we have turned out of the way.

.

24 For let us remember that the wages of sin is death; that it
25 is written, and cannot fail, the soul that sinneth, it shall die.
26 Let us remember that we are born in sin, in sin did our mothers
27 conceive us--sin reigns in all our members, sin is the foul heart's
28 natural liquid, sin looks out of the eye, amen, and leads to lust,
29 sin is in the hearing of the ear, and leads to folly, sin sits on
30 the tongue, and leads to murder. Yes! Sin is the only heritage
31 of the natural man, sin bequeathed us by our natural father, that

*Sermon by Gabriel Grimes in James Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain (New York: Dell, 1953), pp. 102-05.

**Isaiah 6:5.

32 fallen Adam, whose apple sickens and will sicken all generations
 33 living, and generations yet unborn! It was sin that drove the
 34 son of the morning out of Heaven, sin that drove Adam out of
 35 Eden, sin that caused Cain to slay his brother, sin that built
 36 the tower of Babel, sin that caused the fire to fall on Sodom--
 37 sin, from the very foundations of the world, living and breathing
 38 in the heart of man, that causes women to bring forth their
 39 children in agony and darkness, bows down the backs of men with
 40 terrible labor, keeps the belly empty, keeps the table bare,
 41 sends our children, dressed in rags, out into the whorehouses
 42 and dance halls of the world!

.

43 Ah. Woe is me. Woe is me. Yes, beloved--there is no
 44 righteousness in man. All men's hearts are evil, all men are
 45 liars--only God is true. Hear David's cry: "The Lord is my
 46 rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength,
 47 in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation,
 48 and my high tower." Hear Job, sitting in the dust and ashes, his
 49 children dead, his substance gone, surrounded by false comfor-
 50 ters: "Yea, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." And
 51 hear Paul, who had been Saul, a persecutor of the redeemed, struck
 52 down on the road to Damascus, and going forth to preach the gospel:
 53 "And if ye be Christ's, then ye are Abraham's seed, and heirs
 54 according to the promise!"

.

55 For God has a plan. He would not suffer the soul of man to
 56 die, but had prepared a plan for his salvation. In the beginning,
 57 way back there at the laying of the foundations of the world, God
 58 had a plan, amen! to bring all flesh to a knowledge of the truth.
 59 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the
 60 Word was God -- yes, and in Him was life, hallelujah! and this life
 61 was the light of men. Dearly beloved, when God saw how men's
 62 hearts waxed evil, how they turned aside, each to his own way,
 63 how they married and gave in marriage, how they feasted on ungodly
 64 meat and drank and lusted, and blasphemed, and lifted up their
 65 hearts in sinful pride against the Lord -- oh, then, the Son of
 66 God, the blessed lamb that taketh away the sins of the world,
 67 this Son of God who was the Word made flesh, the fulfillment of
 68 the promise -- oh, then, He turned to His Father, crying: "Father,
 69 prepare me a body and I'll go down and redeem sinful man."

70 So glad this evening, praise the Lord!

71 Fathers, here tonight, have you ever had a son who went
 72 astray! Mothers, have you seen your daughters cut down in the
 73 pride and fullness of youth? Has any man here heard the command
 74 which came to Abraham, that he must make his son a living sacrifice

75 on God's altar? Fathers, think of your sons, how you tremble
 76 for them, and try to lead them right, try to feed them so they'll
 77 grow up strong; think of your love for your son, and how any evil
 78 that befalls him cracks up the heart, and think of the pain that
 79 God has borne, sending down His only begotten Son, to dwell among
 80 men on the sinful earth, to be persecuted, to suffer, to bear the
 81 cross and die -- not for His own sins, like our natural sons, but
 82 for the sins of all the world, to take away the sins of all the
 83 world -- that we might have the joy bells ringing deep in our
 84 hearts tonight!

.

85 Woe is me, for when God struck the sinner, the sinner's
 86 eyes were opened, and he saw himself in all his foulness naked
 87 before God's glory. Woe is me! For the moment of salvation is
 88 a blinding light, cracking down into the heart from Heaven -- Heaven
 89 so high, and the sinner so low. Woe is me! For unless God raised
 90 the sinner, he would never rise again!

91 How many here tonight have fallen where Isaiah fell? How
 92 many had cried -- as Isaiah cried? How many could testify, as
 93 Isaiah testified, "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of
 94 hosts?" Ah, whosoever failed to have this testimony should never
 95 see His face, but should be told, on that great day: "Depart from
 96 me, ye that work iniquity," and be hurled forever into the lake
 97 of fire prepared for Satan and all his angels. Oh, would the
 98 sinner rise tonight, and walk the little mile to his salvation,
 99 here to the mercy seat?

Themes

The message of the sermon is stated in its text. "Woe is me, for I am undone . . ." ¹⁷ Gabriel's rhetorical introduction establishes in the minds of his hearers the spiritual superiority of the Prophet Isaiah as one who understands the needs of men, the life pleasing to God, and who foresees the coming of Christ, been raised in righteousness and called to do mighty works. It is this Isaiah who cries, "woe is me." In short, if one as great as Isaiah cries out "woe is me," none in Gabriel's congregation can be judged righteous. ¹⁸ All men must tremble before God.

The universality of sin is the next theme. It declares that sin produces death, yet everyone participates in sin. "In sin did our mothers conceive us . . . sin is the only heritage of the natural man." ¹⁹ Particular sins have practical consequences for people in the congregation, the belly empty, the table bare, children in rags, whore-houses and dance halls of the world. ²⁰

Against man's sin is God's faithfulness--"God is true!" David, Job, and Paul are called as witnesses to the righteousness of God and his intervention in the time of man's sin. ²¹

"God has a plan" is a new topic; it is introduced in paragraph V. God saw men in their sinfulness but before they had fallen--and knowing they would so fall-God planned to redeem them by identifying himself

¹⁷Cf. ante, p. 14, line 1.

¹⁸Cf. ante, p. 14, lines 4-16.

¹⁹Cf. ante, p. 14, lines 26,30,31.

²⁰Cf. ante, p. 15, lines 40-42.

²¹Cf. ante, p. 15, line 45.

with sinful men. This he did in Christ: "Father, prepare me a body and I'll go down and redeem sinful men."²²

Gabriel, for the first time, attempts to evoke understanding of God's action rather than declaring the nature of His action. In paragraph VI the sermon takes a curious turn. He tells us that we can understand God's pain in sacrificing his son. "Fathers, think of your sons, how you tremble for them, and try to lead them right, try to feed them so they'll grow up strong; think of your love for your son . . ." Nonetheless God does not spare the son he loves but lets him die for the sins of the whole world "that we might have the joy bells ringing deep in our hearts tonight!"²³

The saving action of God in spite of the sinner and his sinfulness is the substance of paragraph VII. The following phrases express that action:

God struck the sinner
The moment of salvation is a blinding light cracking
down into the heart from Heaven
Heaven so high, sinner so low
Unless God raised the sinner, he would never rise again.²⁴

The need for personal assurance of the kind which Isaiah experienced is the burden of paragraph VIII. "How many here tonight have fallen where Isaiah fell? How many could testify . . .?" Then follows a warning that without this testimony sinners in the congregation will be hurled forever into the lake of fire prepared for Satan and all his angels.²⁵

²²Cf. ante, p. 15, lines 68,69.

²³Cf. ante, p. 16, lines 83,84.

²⁴Cf. ante, p. 16, lines 85-90.

²⁵Cf. ante, p. 16, lines 96,97.

The sermon closes with an invitation to experience personal salvation or suffer eternal damnation.

Relation between Sermon and Novel

I mentioned above certain statements in Gabriel's sermon which stress the action of God. For the sake of clarity I repeat that summary here.

God struck the sinner
The moment of salvation is a blinding light cracking
down into the heart from Heaven
Heaven so high, sinner so low
Unless God raised the sinner, he would never rise again.²⁶

The single proposition of the sermon is that God's action is necessary or the sinner is lost: "Without God raising the sinner, 'Woe is me for I am undone.'" However, the novel records no event, traces no development which can validate this assertion of the sermon. The sermon calls for an action of God without which man is doomed. But the action never comes. Each significant individual within the novel is left, at best, in stoic trust; at worst, in despair. For two characters within the novel, John and Elisha, there emerges the possibility of a new life. However, across each of them, in the closing moments of the novel, the shadow of Gabriel falls. The sermon and the novel are consistent: man has no hope unless God acts. And God does not act in such a way as to change man's condition.

²⁶Cf. ante, p. 16, lines 85-90.

III. CRITIQUE

Gospel Content

As indicated earlier²⁷ each sermon in this study is evaluated with reference to the statement of the gospel given by H. Grady Davis in his work, Design for Preaching. There five aspects of the gospel are indicated, each of which must be present in Christian proclamation if the sermon is to be judged a Christian sermon. Gabriel's sermon is significantly strong in each respect, as we shall see.

Redemption. Gabriel's sermon is eight paragraphs in length, composed of ninety-two lines. Of these, two paragraphs--thirty-one lines--deal specifically with the redemptive action of God in Jesus Christ. The entire sermon turns upon the proposition that the sinner cannot redeem himself and that God's action is imperative if man is to be saved. The controlling theme of the sermon is redemption. The following paragraph from the sermon is indicative:

. . . When God saw how men's hearts waxed evil, how they turned aside, each to his own way, how they married and gave in marriage, how they feasted on ungodly meat and drank and lusted, and blasphemed, and lifted up their hearts in sinful pride against the Lord--oh, then, the Son of God, the blessed lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, this Son of God who was the Word made flesh, the fulfillment of the promise--oh, then, He turned to his Father, crying: "Father, prepare me a body and I'll go down and redeem sinful man."²⁸

²⁷ Cf. ante, pp. 5-6.

²⁸ Cf. ante, p. 14, lines 61-69.

God's love and purpose. We recall that Davis interprets God's love and purpose in terms of human history.²⁹ For Gabriel, all of human history has one goal--to bring all flesh to the knowledge of the truth.³⁰ God has a plan and he will not let the soul of man die. The congregation is assured that God cares for the whole human family in the way that a good father cares for his earthly children. This is the way God expresses his love--by redeeming sinful men because he loves them the way a father loves an erring child.³¹

In this view of human history, the events which occur on earth between men have no significance. The building of cities, acts of war and conquest, or even the alleviation of human suffering, has no place. In that sense, human history is not taken seriously. It is God's action in redeeming the individual soul which alone has significance.

Judgment and mercy. It is necessary here to recall Davis' particular interpretation of judgment and mercy. They are conjoined so that the act which judges is seen as an act which saves. Judgment becomes mercy. As Davis puts it, God ". . . manifests at once his judgment and mercy."³²

In Gabriel's sermon, judgment and mercy are separated. He would not be able to say with Father Paneloux in The Plague, "This same pestilence which is slaying you works for your good and points your path."³³ Gabriel is preoccupied with the sinful acts of man which bring down

²⁹Davis, op. cit., p. 109.

³⁰Cf. ante, p. 14, line 58.

³¹Cf. ante, pp. 14,15; lines 71-84. ³²Davis, op. cit., p. 109.

³³Albert Camus, The Plague (New York: Random House, 1948), p. 90.

God's judgment. It is the judgment of God and the fear of divine retribution which makes a man turn from his wicked way and seek mercy.

David, Job, and Paul are cited as witnesses that the sinner who turns to God is mightily redeemed.³⁴

In Gabriel's sermon, God strikes men with his judgment; man may choose to respond by appealing to God for mercy, and, if he repents, God will be merciful.

Compassion. Gabriel's God requires of all men bowed heads and trembling hearts. He extends forgiveness, unmerited favor, and help but he is an austere Deity. One approaches him as a judge.

Woe is me!

.
If we have never cried this cry then we have never known salvation; if we fail to live with this cry, hourly, daily, in the midnight hour, and in the light of the noonday sun, then salvation has left us and our feet have laid hold on Hell. Yes, bless our God forever! When we cease to tremble before Him we have turned out of the way.³⁵

By this definition, trembling becomes a full-time occupation even for the faithful; the acknowledged sinner is in a truly deplorable state:

. . . when God struck the sinner, the sinner's eyes were opened, and he saw himself in all his foulness naked before God's glory. . . . For the moment of salvation is a blinding light, cracking down into the heart from Heaven--Heaven so high, and the sinner so low. . . . For unless God raised the sinner, he would never rise again!³⁶

God is spoken of in the sermon as a God of love, but the weight

³⁴Cf. ante, p. 14, lines 45-54.

³⁵Cf. ante, p. 13, lines 15,16.

³⁶Cf. ante, p. 15, lines 85-90.

of Gabriel's remarks do not leave us with much hope of compassion. It is not the wonder of God's compassion that woos the sinner from the world; it is the awfulness of God's judgment that drives him to his knees. The best a repentant sinner can expect and the highest a saint can achieve is that he tremble before God and wail, "Woe is me!"

The new humanity. When H. Grady Davis speaks of the faithful as the new humanity joined with Christ³⁷ he has reference to the quality of life which is to mark the Christian. The only marks of the Christian man which Gabriel's sermon describes are those of the trembling soul. We may assume that a sermon which was not directly concerned with the call to repentance but with the qualities of the Christian life might have a different development, even from Deacon Grimes. But because he is dealing with another matter, Grimes' sermon does not engage the topic of the new humanity.

Theological Summary

In four of the five categories which guide the theological critique, Gabriel's sermon is informed by the gospel. There is some deficiency in the sense of history, in that none of man's works is given validity. Only the topic of the new humanity is left undeveloped. Mercy and judgment, while present, are not conjoined, man's action being the controlling factor in God's mercy. Despite these limitations the substance of the gospel is proclaimed in the sermon, judged on the formal basis described above.

³⁷Davis, op. cit., p. 109.

Homiletical Summary

Earlier in this study, I stated that the novel offers no hope and that the sermon promises a hope which remains unfulfilled. Yet the sermon is significantly strong in its proclamation of the gospel, judged by certain standards. If this is so, a substantive question remains to be answered: does Gabriel's sermon preach the gospel despite its setting in a context which offers no gospel, or does the message of the novel control the sermon in such a way that no gospel is in fact offered?

At first appearance the presence of major elements of the gospel within the sermon lead us to assume that the sermon could be lifted bodily from the novel and stand as an adequate proclamation of the gospel. Upon close examination, however, it is seen that the elements of the gospel which are present are used in such a way that no gospel hope is actually offered. A brief recapitulation demonstrates this fact. Gabriel begins with a quotation from Isaiah which declares that he, Isaiah, and his people are unclean. Gabriel concludes that if Isaiah is unclean, we must be even more so. If Isaiah must tremble before God, then all saints and sinners as well must tremble before him. Gabriel tells his congregation that salvation has left them if they do not cry out that they are unclean, that they are all inescapably involved in sin and that the wages of sin is death--for saint and sinner alike. There is no righteous man.

The despair of the sermon is that God's love and Christ's redemptive act are incongruent with Isaiah's woe and the trembling of the saints before God. Gabriel tells his congregation that the sinner who

repents will hear joy bells ringing in his heart. But that is an empty phrase if the best we can do after we have received Christ is to cry "woe!" and tremble before God.

Why does Gabriel leave his congregation where Isaiah was not left? On the heels of Isaiah's vision of his own unworthiness is the story of his cleansing and of his commission as a witness.³⁸ But Gabriel stops short of any reference to a change in condition.

In the setting of the sermon we are told that there was a second concern in the mind and heart of Gabriel, one which went beyond the question of the sinner's standing before God. This second matter was Gabriel's concern for his own standing before the twenty-four elders who were to hear his sermon.

Gabriel did not want his performance--the most important of his career so far, and on which so much depended--to be obliterated; he did not want to be dismissed as a mere boy who was scarcely ready to be counted in the race. . . . He fasted on his knees before God and did not cease, daily and nightly, to pray that God might work through him a mighty work and cause all men to see that, indeed, God's hand was on him, that he was the Lord's anointed.³⁹

Apparently, Gabriel felt that to win the approval of the evangelists he would have to demonstrate competence in preaching the whole gospel in one sermon. From that standpoint, the sermon achieved its purpose; the approbation of the elders assured Gabriel that he was accepted into their fellowship.⁴⁰

³⁸Isaiah 6:6-9.

³⁹Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain (New York: Dell, 1953), p. 101.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 106.

CHAPTER III

THE PLAGUE¹

In the novel The Plague, Camus has written more than a novel. It is an interpretation of our history, a judgment on our time and a personal confession. The Plague, with this depth of statement, has been judged "a great novel, the most disturbing, most moving novel yet to come out of the chaos of the mid-century."² Camus' prestige is built upon his craftsmanship, his participation in the life of our time, his integrity as an artist, and his historical-moral sense.

In his notebooks for this work Camus says:

I wish to express, by means of the plague, the feeling of suffocation from which we all suffered and the atmosphere of threat and exile in which we lived. At the same time I want to extend my interpretation to the notion of existence in general. . . . The plague will give an image of those whose share during this war was meditation, silence, and moral suffering.³

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL

Summary

The story of The Plague turns upon the reactions of people toward catastrophe. The novel traces the course of a plague which strikes the Algerian town of Oran, cutting its inhabitants off from the world and

¹Albert Camus, The Plague (New York: Random House, 1948)

²Germaine Bree, Camus (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1959), p. 127.

³Quoted in Ibid., p. 125.

subjecting them to a reign of terror. The plague is a symbol of the forces of evil which reach epidemic proportion in the mid-twentieth century.

Camus is specific regarding the way in which characters in the novel are to be understood. His images, or characters, are reflections of various attitudes toward the plague. In the novel, one man, Dr. Rieux, observes the wide range of attitudes which others take toward the plague. He sees many people refusing to accept the plague as a reality; for himself, identification with human suffering is the only answer. In an admittedly hopeless situation, courting his own death, Dr. Rieux stands for the decision to act and the will to live. Symbolically, he outlives the plague. Survival has its price, however, for he has been stripped of elemental emotions, being cut off from the world by the very acts of trying to save it.

Themes

Extending Camus' stated intention, that the novel interprets existence in general, I see four themes within the story. They lead to an understanding of the meaning of our time, though not in the programmatic way of telling us what to do about it.

The first theme is that man, at this point in his history, is in the grip of monstrous forces which destroy young and old, weak and strong. The second theme develops the idea that the monstrous forces at work in our time are not, so to speak, intruders from the outside. They are a rank growth of ills latent within contemporary society. When these ills reach epidemic proportions, no scientific skill can stay

them; they must simply run their course. In the third theme, Camus tells us we are experiencing suffocation. By this he means the ills of our time enclose us, allowing no escape. The fourth and final theme deals with the response of individuals within the society to the conditions in which they are compelled to live. One cannot escape the conclusion that, for Camus, the answer that is most adequate is that of identifying with the needs of others and acting to alleviate suffering.

It would be false to the artistry of the novel to suggest that the themes which have been described here are stated in so many words. Rather, they are traceable lines within the pattern and texture of the work.

II. THE SERMON

Setting

As I have suggested above, significant characters in The Plague are protagonists for particular views toward the catastrophe which has overtaken us in contemporary life. Father Paneloux is the symbolic voice of the church. In the novel he delivers two sermons. The one studied here is the first of the two and shows attitudes which will later be chastened by more direct contact with the plague. The first sermon shows a confident man declaring the judgments of God. The second sermon shows a harrassed and weary pastor struggling with his conscience over the collision between traditionalist views of the church and the hard facts of human suffering.⁴

⁴Camus, op. cit., pp. 198-206.

Paneloux is introduced as a scholarly priest who flings himself into an analysis of the plague with as great fervor as he is known to give to the study of Augustine.⁵ The plague, Paneloux concludes, after studying the history of former and similar catastrophes, is a visitation of God.

⁵ Ibid., p. 85.

SERMON II*

1 "Calamity has come on you, my brethren, and, my brethren,
2 you deserved it, . . ."

3 ". . . The first time this scourge appears in history, it
4 was wielded to strike down the enemies of God. Pharaoh set himself
5 up against the divine will, and the plague beat him to his knees.
6 Thus from the dawn of recorded history the scourge of God has
7 humbled the proud of heart and laid low those who hardened them-
8 selves against Him. Ponder this well, my friends, and fall on your
9 knees."

.

10 "If today the plague is in your midst, that is because the
11 hour has struck for taking thought. The just man need have no
12 fear, but the evildoer has good cause to tremble. For plague is
13 the flail of God and the world His threshing-floor, and implacably
14 He will thresh out His harvest until the wheat is separated from
15 the chaff. There will be more chaff than wheat, few chosen of the
16 many called. Yet this calamity was not willed by God. Too long
17 this world of ours has connived at evil, too long has it counted
18 on the divine mercy, on God's forgiveness. Repentance was enough,
19 men thought; nothing was forbidden. Everyone felt comfortably
20 assured; when the day came, he would surely turn from his sins
21 and repent. Pending that day, the easiest course was to surrender
22 all along the line; divine compassion would do the rest. For a
23 long while God gazed down on this town with eyes of compassion;
24 but He grew weary of waiting, His eternal hope was too long
25 deferred, and now He has turned His face away from us. And so,
26 God's light withdrawn, we walk in darkness, in the thick darkness
27 of this plague."

.

28 "We read in the Golden Legend that in the time of King
29 Umberto Italy was swept by plague and its greatest ravages took
30 place in Rome and Pavia. So dreadful were these that the living
31 hardly sufficed to bury the dead. And a good angel was made
32 visible to human eyes, giving his order to an evil angel who
33 bore a great hunting-spear, and bidding him strike the houses;
34 and as many strokes as he dealt a house, so many dead were carried
35 out of it."

* Sermon with summary paragraph by Father Paneloux in Albert Camus, The Plague (New York: Random House, 1948), pp. 86-91.

.....

36 "My brothers, that fatal hunt is up, and harrying our streets
37 today. See him there, that angel of the pestilence, comely as
38 Lucifer, shining like Evil's very self! He is hovering above your
39 roofs with his great spear in his right hand, poised to strike,
40 while his left hand is stretched toward one or other of your houses.
41 Maybe at this very moment his finger is pointing to your door, the
42 red spear crashing on its panels, and even now the plague is
43 entering your home and settling down in your bedroom to await your
44 return. Patient and watchful, ineluctable as the order of the
45 scheme of things, it bides its time. No earthly power, nay, not
46 even -- mark me well -- that vaunted might of human science can
47 avail you to avert that hand once it is stretched toward you. And
48 winnowed like corn on the blood-stained threshing-floor of suffer-
49 ing, you will be cast away with the chaff."

50 At this point the Father reverted with heightened eloquence
51 to the symbol of the flail. He bade his hearers picture a huge
52 wooden bar whirling above the town, striking at random, swinging
53 up again in a shower of drops of blood, and spreading carnage and
54 suffering on earth "for the seed-time that shall prepare the har-
55 vest of the truth."

.....

56 "Yes, the hour has come for serious thought. You fondly
57 imagined it was enough to visit God on Sundays, and thus you could
58 make free of your weekdays. You believed some brief formalities,
59 some bendings of the knee, would recompense Him well enough for
60 your criminal indifference. But God is not mocked. These brief
61 encounters could not sate the fierce hunger of His love. He wished
62 to see you longer and more often; that is His manner of loving and,
63 indeed, it is the only manner of loving. And this is why, wearied
64 of waiting for you to come to Him, He loosed on you this visita-
65 tion; as He has visited all the cities that offended against Him
66 since the dawn of history. Now you are learning your lesson, the
67 lesson that was learned by Cain and his offspring, by the people
68 of Sodom and Gomorrah, by Job and Pharoah, by all that hardened
69 their hearts against Him. And like them you have been beholding
70 mankind and all creation with new eyes, since the gates of this
71 city closed on you and on the pestilence. Now, at last, you know
72 the hour has struck to bend your thoughts to first and last things."

.....

73 "Many of you are wondering, I know, what I am leading up to.
74 I wish to lead you to the truth and teach you to rejoice, yes,
75 rejoice -- in spite of all that I have been telling you. For the
76 time is past when a helping hand or mere words of good advice
77 could set you on the right path. Today the truth is a command.

78 It is a red spear sternly pointing to the narrow path, the one
 79 way of salvation. And thus, my brothers, at last it is revealed
 80 to you, the divine compassion which has ordained good and evil in
 81 everything; wrath and pity; the plague and your salvation. This
 82 same pestilence which is slaying you works for your good and points
 83 your path."

84 "Many centuries ago the Christians of Abyssinia saw in the
 85 plague a sure and God-sent means of winning eternal life. Those
 86 who were not yet stricken wrapped round them sheets in which men
 87 had died of plague, so as to make sure of their death. I grant
 88 you such a frenzied quest of salvation was not to be commended.
 89 It shows an overhaste -- indeed, a presumptuousness, which we can
 90 but deplore. No man should seek to force God's hand or to hurry
 91 on the appointed hour, and from a practice that aims at speeding
 92 up the order of events which God has ordained unalterably from all
 93 time, it is but a step to heresy. Yet we can learn a salutary
 94 lesson from the zeal, excessive though it was, of those Abyssinian
 95 Christians. Much of it is alien to our more enlightened spirits,
 96 and yet it gives us a glimpse of that radiant eternal light which
 97 glows, a small still flame, in the dark core of human suffering.
 98 And this light, too, illuminates the shadowed paths that lead
 99 towards deliverance. It reveals the will of God in action, un-
 100 failingly transforming evil into good. And once again today it is
 101 leading us through the dark valley of fears and groans towards the
 102 holy silence, the well-spring of all life. This, my friends, is
 103 the vast consolation I would hold out to you, so that when you
 104 leave this house of God you will carry away with you not only words
 105 of wrath, but a message, too, of comfort for your hearts."

106 . . . the Father had a few more words to say. He told
 107 them that after having made it clear that this plague came from
 108 God for the punishment of their sins, he would not have recourse,
 109 in concluding, to an eloquence that, considering the tragic nature
 110 of the occasion, would be out of keeping. He hoped and believed
 111 that all of them now saw their position in its true light. But,
 112 before leaving the pulpit, he would like to tell them something
 113 he had been reading in an old chronicle of the Black Death at
 114 Marseille. In it Mathieu Marais, the chronicler, laments his lot;
 115 he says he has been cast into hell to languish without succor and
 116 without hope. Well, Matthieu Marais was blind! Never more intensely
 117 than today had he, Father Paneloux, felt the immanence of divine
 118 succor and Christian hope granted to all alike. He hoped against
 119 hope that, despite all the horrors of these dark days, despite the
 120 groans of men and women in agony, our fellow citizens would offer
 121 up to heaven that one prayer which is truly Christian, a prayer of
 122 love. And God would see to the rest.

Themes

The first of the two sermons in The Plague is constructed with the meticulous care that has gone into every other portion of the novel. Matters of style which will not generally concern us in this study are important here for the substance of the sermon and its structure are intimately connected.

Everything that the preacher, Father Paneloux, wishes to say is condensed into the first sentence: "Calamity has come on you, my brethren, and, my brethren, you deserved it."⁶ Every other statement in the sermon bears in some way upon this announcement. The subsequent two paragraphs present themes which are later repeated. After these, nothing new will be said, no new idea developed, except the theme of hope, which serves as the conclusion to the sermon.

In the second paragraph of the sermon we are told about the plague in Egypt. It came as a judgment from God for the purpose of inducing repentance.⁷ Paragraph III shows how the plague in Oran is a visitation of God; the proper response to it is one of repentance.⁸ With these two matters before us, the substance of the sermon has been presented and the further paragraphs simply deepen and apply in slightly varying ways the topics already introduced. Paragraph IV returns to the pattern of paragraph II and cites another incident, this time the legendary form of a historical event concerning a plague in Italy.⁹ Paragraph V returns to the treatment we first met in paragraph III, namely,

⁶Cf. ante, p. 30, lines 1,2. ⁷Cf. ante, p. 30, lines 3-9.

⁸Cf. ante, p. 30, lines 10-27. ⁹Cf. ante, p. 30, lines 28-35.

the application of the historical event to the conditions in Oran. The imagery is embellished, the emotional tone heightened, and the announcement is made that nothing can be done to stay this plague.¹⁰ Paragraph VI combines the themes of paragraphs I and II, that is, the historical references and applications are made to the consciences of the people of Oran.

Now you are learning your lesson, the lesson that was learned by Cain and his offspring, by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, by Job and Pharoah, by all that hardened their hearts against Him. And like them, you have been beholding mankind and all creation with new eyes, since the gates of this city closed on you and on the pestilence. Now, at last, you know the hour has struck to bend your thoughts to first and last things.¹¹

Paragraph VII adds the note of hope which will be renewed and strengthened as the conclusion of the sermon. It is introduced with the greatest tact and skill: "Many of you are wondering, I know, what I am leading up to. I wish to lead you to the truth and teach you to rejoice, yes, rejoice--in spite of all that I have been telling you."¹²

After this moment of reflection and personal involvement, he abruptly shakes his congregation with the judgment of God: "For the time is past when a helping hand or mere words of good advice could set you on the right path. Today the truth is a command. It is a red spear sternly pointing to the narrow path, the only way of salvation."¹³ These words are followed with a rhetorical buildup of theme on theme:

¹⁰ Cf. ante, p. 31, lines 36-55.

¹¹ Cf. ante, p. 31, lines 66-69.

¹² Cf. ante, p. 31, lines 73-75.

¹³ Cf. ante, p. 31, lines 75-79.

And thus, my brother, at last it is revealed to you, the divine compassion which has ordained good and evil in everything; wrath and pity; the plague and your salvation. This same pestilence which is slaying you works for your good and points your path.¹⁴

The tone of the sermon shifts abruptly. Paneloux speaks matter-of-factly of a plague in Abyssinia and says that those Christians embraced the providences of God somewhat too readily, seeing in the plague a means of ready salvation through an early death. Paneloux does not approve this haste but says that their attitude in Abyssinia is the kind of attitude toward the Christian hope which he would like to see develop in Oran.¹⁵

The sermon closes with another application of historical material to the condition of Oran. Once again the note of hope is sounded: "Never more intensely than today . . . the immanence of divine succor and Christian hope granted to all alike."¹⁶ The sermon ends with a call to prayer. We note that the prayer is for love, not deliverance from the plague.¹⁷ The closing line is a doxology or ascription: "And God will see to the rest."¹⁸

Relation between Sermon and Novel

A comparison of the sermon with the novel reveals that the sermon presents one way of understanding the plague: acceptance.

¹⁴Cf. ante, p. 32, lines 79-83.

¹⁵Cf. ante, p. 32, lines 84-105.

¹⁶Cf. ante, p. 32, lines 116, 117.

¹⁷Cf. ante, p. 32, lines 119-122.

¹⁸Cf. ante, p. 32, line 122.

Alternatives are escape, service, or panic. In the novel, Dr. Rieux expresses Camus' ethical ideal. Since the novel declares that the alleviation of suffering is the ethical ideal, the sermon offers an unacceptable alternative. Father Paneloux asks his congregation to accept the plague, repent and rejoice since God is demonstrating his concern for his people. Camus' Rieux asks few theoretical questions, is concerned only to work where people suffer.

The relation of the first sermon to the themes of the novel is further clarified by the changes which Camus has written into the substance and setting of the second.¹⁹ Father Paneloux's second sermon softens the judgments pronounced in the first but does not retract them. It shows a humbled pastor who, since delivering the first sermon, has gone out into streets to work with his people. In the second sermon he says "we" whereas the first consistently used the pronoun "you."²⁰ After the second sermon, Father Paneloux works incessantly, no longer takes the needed precautions; denies himself medical attention, declaring that he had come to the conclusion that a clergyman should not call upon a medical doctor for aid.²¹ Paneloux dies toward the end of the plague. The index card for his death indicates "doubtful case."²²

Father Paneloux in The Plague stands for scholarly, devoted, and morally courageous irrelevance and inadequacy of the church to deal with the real issues with which the people live.

¹⁹ Camus, op. cit., pp. 200-06.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 200.

²¹ Ibid., p. 206.

²² Ibid., p. 211.

III. THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

Gospel Content

Redemption. As in the sermon from Moby Dick, this sermon makes no mention of Jesus Christ, nor does it refer explicitly to a redemptive act of God outside of the plague itself. Rather, the plague is treated exclusively as the redemptive act, as is God's pursuit of Jonah in the Moby Dick sermon. Father Paneloux tells his congregation that this plague which is slaying them also works for their good and points their path.²³

God's love and purpose. Father Paneloux is most anxious to declare God's love. This love is traced by the plagues which, from the first, have been God's means of getting his children's attention and of striking down his enemies. So it was in the time of King Umberto in Italy, in Abyssinia and in Marseille.²⁴

The sermon deals principally, however, with God's need for the love of men, rather than declaring God's love for men. God humbles the proud and lays low those who harden themselves against him. Even repentance is not enough. God looks with compassion but grows weary of waiting. His eternal hope for man's love is too long deferred. God is not mocked by our brief visits on Sunday because they cannot "sate the fierce hunger of His love." "He wished to see you longer and more

²³Cf. ante, p. 32, lines 82,83.

²⁴Cf. ante, p. 30, lines 28,29; p. 32, lines 84-87; lines 113-119.

often; that is His manner of loving and, indeed, it is the only manner of loving."²⁵

God's purpose in history, according to Father Paneloux, is that men should return His compassionate love. The tragic plague is the scourge of God. Out of it He wants His people to offer up the only truly Christian prayer, a prayer of love.²⁶

Judgment and mercy. Father Paneloux's sermon has one theme: Thank God for this calamity! If he talks of judgment it is so that mercy can be proclaimed. If he speaks of mercy it is because judgment has already fallen.

If today the plague is in your midst, that is because the hour has struck for taking thought. The just man need have no fear, but the evil doer has good cause to tremble. For the plague is the flail of God and the world His threshingfloor, and implacably He will thresh out His harvest until the wheat is separated from the chaff.²⁷

Thus the judgment of God on the evil doer. But judgment leads to grace:

Many of you are wondering, I know, what I am leading up to. I wish to lead you to the truth and teach you to rejoice, yes, rejoice--in spite of all that I have been telling you. . . And thus, my brothers, at last it is revealed to you, the divine compassion which has ordained good and evil in everything; wrath and pity; the plague and your salvation.²⁸

The good Father then seems to fear that his message has gone home rather too well. He warns his flock not to emulate the Abyssinian Christians. They, he tells them, thought to gain heaven quickly by wrapping themselves in dead men's sheets. That "shows an over-haste," and, therefore, is not advisable.²⁹

²⁵Cf. ante, p. 31, lines 61,62. ²⁶Cf. ante, p. 32, lines 121,122.

²⁷Cf. ante, p. 30, lines 10-15. ²⁸Cf. ante, p. 31, lines 73-81.

²⁹Cf. ante, p. 32, lines 84 ff.

Compassion. I have mentioned above that the word "compassion" is used here in a special sense. It is an abbreviation for forgiveness, unmerited favor and help. Compassion, by this definition, refers to God's attitude toward the sinner regardless of the sinner's ability to respond. With this in mind, we examine the emphasis in Father Paneloux' sermon.

In the sermon the sinner is instructed to respond to the plague with love to God. God's compassion is extended to those who respond and his judgment is sent upon those who will not. Thus, the emphasis is upon man's response, not God's compassion. We do not see God searching tenderly for the lost sheep, but harrying him through the streets. We hear no tender shepherd's call, but the swish of a blood-red scythe and the thud of an awesome flail. Father Paneloux baptizes these instruments of God's judgment saying that they are chosen to compel love and that they would not be used were men responsive to other less grievous means. In this sense they are not willed by God.³⁰ Father Paneloux is generous; the weight of his message is that God's favor is contingent on our ability to respond.

The new humanity. The description of the old humanity, or in Paneloux's terms, those who must die in the plague, is richly drawn. They are proud of heart and hardened against God; they connive at evil, presume on God's mercy and think that nothing is forbidden; they surrender all along the line, assuming that brief religious formalities are sufficient.³¹

³⁰Cf. ante, p. 30, line 16.

³¹Cf. ante, p. 31, lines 56 ff.

The attitude approved by God is this: the Christian takes serious thought and falls on his knees; he sees mankind and all creation with new eyes since the pestilence has struck; he rejoices in the divine compassion which ordains good and evil in all things; sees God in action transforming evil into good and leading his people from dark fears into "the holy silence, the well-spring of all life."³²

Theological Summary

The adherence of Father Paneloux's sermon to the apostolic examples of preaching is illustrated by setting the key assertions of the sermon over against a summary of the gospel.

<u>Gospel</u>	<u>Sermon</u>
Redemptive action revealing God's love toward men and his purpose in history	The plague as interpreted by Father Paneloux.
God's action in history manifests at once his judgment and his mercy	The divine compassion which has ordained good and evil in everything . . . The same pestilence which is slaying you works for your good and points your path.
A new basis for the relation between men and God	The will of God in action is revealed, unfailingly transforming evil into good, leading us through the dark valley of fears and groans toward the holy silence, the well-spring of all life.
Calls into being a reconstituted humanity . . . living by participation in Christ's life	Despite all the horrors of these dark days, despite groans of men and women in agony, offer that one prayer which is truly Christian, a prayer of love.

³² Cf. ante, p. 32, lines 101, 102.

I indicated above that there is no mention of Christ in the sermon.³³ This is more than a mere oversight. The sermon appears to know nothing of God incarnate, the plague occupying the place of Christ as the redemptive event. God is distant; he sends the plagues which visit the children of men as from afar. God is not present with the people, suffering with them in the plague. Paneloux attempts to bridge this situation saying that he wants to show God's love and justice, "not only words of wrath, but a message, too, of comfort . . ." There is, however, no suffering servant present in the sermon. One is reminded of the plight of Roy in Go Tell It on the Mountain. In Roy's family, the slightest infraction of the rules laid down by his father, Gabriel Grimes, brings down harsh punishment. Roy complains to his mother:

"I just don't like him beating on me all the time . . . I ain't no dog." . . . "Your Daddy beats you . . . because he loves you." Roy laughed. "That ain't the kind of love I understand, old lady. What you reckon he'd do if he didn't love me?"³⁴

To find the suffering servant one has to look outside of the sermon to the actions of Dr. Rieux. Paneloux, once out of the pulpit, deals effectively with suffering people, living in the tension described in the second sermon:

My brothers . . . the love of God is a hard love. It demands total self-surrender, disdain of our human personality. And it alone can reconcile us to suffering and the deaths of children, it alone can justify them, since we cannot understand them, and we can only make God's will ours. That is the hard lesson I would share with you today. That is the faith, cruel in men's eyes, and crucial in God's

³³ Cf. ante, p.

³⁴ Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain (New York: Dell, 1953), pp. 23, 24.

which we must ever strive to compass. We must aspire beyond ourselves toward that high and fearful vision. . . .³⁵

It is this tension, as much as the plague, which kills him.

Homiletical Summary

Father Paneloux's sermon has great interest as an illustration of one method of homiletical development of an idea. In discussing the themes of the sermon, I noted the intimate connection between structure and substance.³⁶ It is the structure which particularly concerns us here. The sermon begins with a succinct and powerful statement of its topic followed by a paragraph which expands on the meaning of the first sentence. From that point on there are alternate historical illustrations and applications of the historical reference to the condition of his congregation. There is a series of four such units, the last being blended into one paragraph. Each paragraph of historical reference states the idea that the plague is an instrument used by God to accomplish his purposes with his people. Each paragraph of application carries the themes of repentance and hope. The conclusion expresses the idea that a prayer of love should be man's response to God's providential acts. The sermon is a model of clarity and simplicity in the development of an idea.

The topic was obviously relevant to the hearers. Since it undertook an explanation of the catastrophe through which they were all passing and since the sermon had great force, it was predictable that an exceptional response would occur. We may assume that the general

³⁵Camus, op. cit., pp. 205,206.

³⁶Cf. ante, p. 34.

reaction to the sermon was not what Paneloux might have desired. The wrong party gave immediate support and the prayer of love for which Paneloux called was not forthcoming. The magistrate, a bellicose spokesman for government who had wanted to keep the people ignorant of the true nature of the plague, declared the sermon "absolutely irrefutable."

But not everyone took so unqualified a view. To some the sermon simply brought home the fact that they had been sentenced, for an unknown crime, to an indeterminate period of punishment. And while a good many people adapted themselves to confinement and carried on their humdrum lives as before, there were others who rebelled and whose one idea now was to break loose from the prison-house.³⁷

Perhaps the most instructive reaction to the sermon, from a homiletical point of view, is that the sermon clarified the true nature of the situation in which the people lived.

. . . this Sunday of the sermon marked the beginning of something like a widespread panic in the town, and it took so deep a hold as to lead one to suspect that only now had the true nature of their situation dawned on our townspeople.³⁸

Despite its excellent structure and its substantial, formal grasp of the gospel message, the total sermon speaks for the inadequate, perhaps callous, reaction of the church to human suffering. In Paneloux's first sermon, we have the portrayal of the church being incited to look to its defense of theology rather than engage in the problems of people. Thus the church saves its own life, rather than risking it in the streets where the issues of life are being worked out. Read with this in mind, the sermon merely recites stories of the plagues and pronounces a benediction upon them to the glory of God. Erudition obscures the

³⁷Camus, op. cit., p. 92.

³⁸Ibid.

lack of saving compassion. The plague has words of love sprinkled over it like the waters of baptism but the people are left in well-informed despair. In the context of the novel, the sermon is only useful in clarifying alternatives which Camus rejects. We must join him in that rejection, but for different reasons, chiefly for the lack of a doctrine of the incarnation. One is tempted to say of the sermon what Father Paneloux's death report said of him, "doubtful case,"³⁹ but it is not that indefinite a matter. The sermon overrides human need and defends God rather than redeems men.

³⁹Ibid., p. 211.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUND AND THE FURY¹

With the novel The Sound and the Fury we enter the fetid and gloomy reaches of Faulkner's celebrated literary art. Here the world is seen through the child eyes of a speechless and slobbering idiot, or mirrored in a decadent white southern family where irrelevant proprieties mask the death's head of original sin. Suicide is here, incest, thievery, and the sickness unto death that goes on copulating and flourishing. Poverty and squalor of mind and morals, like rotten leaves of autumn, have a fertilizing effect and produce rank growth. Faulkner speaks of ancient wounds going into fresh battles.² In his works, evil carries its ancient wounds into fresh and victorious battles with each new generation.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL

Summary

The novel describes the course of one family's life in sleepy, slovenly Jefferson, Mississippi. The family of Jason Richmond Compson has enough aristocratic blood, enough memory of property and position, to assume the prerogatives of southern gentility, but having insufficient resources of mind and will, the family manages only to be shabby.

¹William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Random House, 1946).

²Ibid., p. 323.

In them, decadence runs riot. Jason Compson sires a son who, after a long and incestuous, but unconsummated, love affair with his sister, commits suicide. Jason's daughter, Candace, a readily available lover throughout her teens, hastily marries and is cast off by her first husband when he finds her pregnant by another man. The third child grows up to become a canny bachelor and petty thief. Compson's fourth child is an idiot whose molestations require that he be castrated. The father of this unlikely brood drinks himself into the grave leaving behind a whining, durable wife.

Nor does the strain of evil wear thin in that generation. It is perpetuated in Quentin, the illegitimate daughter of Candace. At the age of seventeen she retrieves money that her uncle had stolen from her, which, over many years, had been sent for her support by her mother. She then absconds with a circus roustabout.

All remains unforgiven.

Themes

Faulkner is not an author who contrives plots and locates characters on master plans. He does not write structured novels such as The Plague. The Sound and the Fury is no formal garden; it is a rank growth that has its twisted and interlocking trunk and branches. We may trace its themes but must be guided while doing so by the awareness that there will always be a sense of incompleteness and ambiguity remaining.³

In this novel, the main trunk is rooted in the willful, unseeing

³Malcom Cowley (ed.), The Indispensable Faulkner (New York: Book Society, 1950), pp. 4-5.

malignity of man. The branches bear the fruit of perversity. The Compson family expresses this theme. Within that brood, which is trunk and which is branches is of little consequence.

Faulkner, however, offers more than one theme. The good, curious as it may be in form, is present. It serves to prop up the evil, like posts driven into the ground to support overladen branches. While the Compson family expresses evil growth, Dilsey, Compson's Negro servant, expresses one form of the good. She is tenderly portrayed. She moves with suffering, shuffling gait and uncomplicated moral grandeur, loving, serving, forgiving, protecting. She absorbs the weight of a family that wants to be sick, wants to kill or be killed. It also wants to be pitied and cared for. Dilsey endures.⁴

The ministrations of Dilsey toward the Compson family are matched by the ambivalent services of Luster, a fourteen-year-old Negro who is "not only capable of the complete care and security of an idiot twice his age and three times his size, but could keep him entertained⁵ as well.

With the aid of servants, the Compsons manage to be fed and cleaned up after. Thus they are able to go about their decline without undue concern for rudimentary necessities.

⁴Ibid., p. 22.

⁵Ibid.

II. THE SERMON

Setting

The sermon by Rev'un Shegog⁶ is in character with the surrealist context in which it is preached. Faulkner sketches its setting as follows:

Notched into a cut of red clay crowned with oaks the road appeared to stop short off, like a cut ribbon. Beside it a weathered church lifted its crazy steeple like a painted church, and the whole scene was as flat and without perspective as a painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth, against the windy sunlight of space and April and a midmorning filled with bells. . . .

The church had been decorated, with sparse flowers from kitchen gardens and hedgerows, and with streamers of coloured crepe paper. Above the pulpit hung a battered Christmas bell, the accordion sort that collapses. The pulpit was empty, though the choir was already in place, fanning themselves although it was not warm.⁷

Images of reality, such as the weathered church in a stand of oaks, blend with unreality; the road leading to the church stops short off and the church is not so much set on a hill as set on the edge of the abyss. The preacher himself partakes of the same dual character, less than real, more than real: "His voice was level and cold. It sounded too big to have come from him and they listened at first through curiosity, as they would have to a monkey talking."⁸

The sermon deals with ultimate and eschatological events and the congregation is suspended over the edge of time, not dealt with as real men and women engaged in life's daily functions. Only the incongruous Christmas bell and crepe paper streamers and grubby flowers partake of conventional reality in that crazy-steepled church.

⁶Ibid., pp. 310-13.

⁷Ibid., p. 308.

⁸Ibid., p. 309.

At first appearance the preacher is unprepossessing. He is undersized, shabbily dressed, and has the wizened face of a small, aged monkey.⁹ Frony whispers, "En dey brung dat all de way fum Saint Looey."¹⁰ However, after the sermon, Frony's mother, Dilsey, who has "sat bolt upright . . . crying rigidly and quietly" during the sermon, walks away, continuing to weep. Frony says: ". . . Didn't look like much at first, but hush!" And Dilsey: "He seed de power en de glory."¹¹

⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁰Loc. cit.

¹¹Ibid., p. 313.

SERMON III*

1 "Brethren."

.

2 "Brethren and sisteren."

.

3 "I got the recollection and the blood of the Lamb."

4 "Brethren,"

.

5 "Breddren en sistuhn!"

.

6 "I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb!"

.

7 "When de long, cold -- Oh, I tells you, breddren, when de
8 long, cold -- I sees de light en I sees de word, po sinner! Dey
9 passed away in Egypt, de swingin chariots; de generations passed
10 away. Wus a rich man: whar he now, O breddren? Was a po man:
11 whar he now, O sistuhn? Oh I tells you, ef you aint got de milk
12 en de dew of de old salvation when de long, cold years rolls
13 away!"

.

14 "I tells you, breddren, en I tells you, sistuhn, dey'll come
15 a time. Po sinner saying Let me lay down wid de Lawd, lemme lay
16 down my load. Den what Jesus gwine say, O breddren? O sistuhn?
17 Is you got de ricklickshun en de Blood of de Lamb? Case I aint
18 gwine load down heaven!"

19 "Breddren! Look at dem little chillen settin dar. Jesus
20 was like dat once. He mammy suffered de glory en de pangs.
21 Sometime maybe she helt him at de nightfall, whilst de angels singin
22 him to sleep; maybe she look out de do' en sees de Roman po-lice
23 passin."

*Sermon by Rev'un Shegog in William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Random House, 1946), pp. 310-13.

24 "Listen breddren! I sees de day. Ma'y setting in de do'
 25 wid Jesus in her lap, de little Jesus. Like dem chillen dar, de
 26 little Jesus. I hears de angels singin de peaceful songs en de
 27 glory; I sees the closin eyes: sees Mary jump up, sees de sojer
 28 face: We gwine to kill! We gwine to kill! We gwine to kill yo
 29 little Jesus! I hears de weepin en de lamentation of de po
 30 mammy widout de salvation en de word of God!"

31 "I sees hit, breddren! I sees hit! Sees de blastin,
 32 blindin sight! I sees Calvary, wid de sacred trees, sees de
 33 thief en de merderer en de least of dese; I hears de boasting
 34 en de braggin: Ef you be Jesus, lif up you tree en walk! I
 35 hears de wailin of women en de evenin lamentations; I hears de
 36 weepin en de cryin en de turnt-away face of God: de done kilt
 37 Jesus; de done kilt my Son!"

38 "O blind sinner! Breddren, I tells you; sistuhn, I says
 39 to you, when de Lawd did turn His mighty face, say, Aint gwine
 40 overload Heaven! I can see de widowed God shet His do'; I sees
 41 de whelmin flood roll between; I sees de darkness en de death
 42 everlastin upon de generations. Den, lo! Breddren! Yes,
 43 breddren! Whut I see? What I see, O sinner? I sees de resur-
 44 rection en de light; sees de meek Jesus saying Dey kilt Me dat
 45 ye shall live again; I died dat dem what sees en believes shall
 46 never die. Breddren, O breddren! I sees de doom crack en hears
 47 de golden horns shoutin down de glory, en de arisen dead what
 48 got de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb!"

Themes

The essence of the sermon is found in the phrases "I see," and "I got," and the sense of participation which this evoked in the hearers. The sermon is a collage of biblical events interpreted within the experience of the hearers. The single theme is: "I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb!"¹² This I take to be an affirmation of self-authenticating religious experience. It is a free translation into Rev'un Shegog's idiom of New Testament citations such as:

. . . justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past . . .¹³

or

. . . if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.¹⁴

or

. . . they have conquered . . . by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony . . .¹⁵

Having stated his personal experience, he summarizes "the long cold . . ." He means by this the long reaches of human history for he continues, "Dey passed away in Egypt, de swinging chariots; de generations passed away. Wus a rich man: whar he now, Was a po man: whar he now . . . de long, cold years rolls away." We have here an announcement: the generations pass away.¹⁶

¹² Cf. ante, p. 50, line 6.

¹³ Romans 3:24,25.

¹⁵ Revelation 12:11.

¹⁴ I John 1:7.

¹⁶ Cf. ante, p. 50, lines 10-13.

The second movement of the sermon, following "I see--do you see? I got--is you got?" includes the story of the slaughter of infants in Bethlehem. But it is more than a retelling; it is a re-enactment. The preacher sets his congregation within the framework of the gospel narrative. He invites the people to look at the children among them and imagine Mary holding Jesus as they are holding their young. He then portrays the arrival of soldiers bent on the killing of infants, intent to destroy Jesus: "I sees the closin eyes; sees Mary jump up, sees de sojer face: We gwine kill! We gwine kill you little Jesus!"¹⁷

Crucifixion and resurrection are both treated in this style. The sermon closes with a vision of ultimate Christian victory: "I sees de doom crack en hears de golden horns shoutin down de glory, en de arisen dead what got de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb!"¹⁸

Certainly, with Dilsey, we can sense "I've seed de first en de last,"¹⁹ when the preacher portrays God shutting his door, turning away his face, and the descent of darkness and death "everlastin upon de generations."²⁰

Whatever glory there is, comes in the future in both sermon and novel. The preacher, having described Calvary, the destruction of the world, the shutting of God's door, the darkness and death of the generations, cries out that then comes the resurrection and the light.

Of all his hearers, Dilsey alone appears to be able to face her future with renewed confidence after hearing this sermon.

¹⁷Cf. ante, p. 51, lines 27-29. ¹⁸Cf. ante, p. 51, lines 46-48.

¹⁹Loc. cit.

²⁰Cf. ante, p. 51, lines 41-42.

Relation between Sermon and Novel

In The Sound and the Fury the themes within the novel and the sermon grow from the same root. The novel surveys the passing generations, three of them. The sermon likewise sets the hearer within the passing of generations in the long sweep of history. The Compsons, unable to see the meaning of their lives and thus alter their destiny, go on deceiving and destroying themselves. The sermon calls upon men to see, to perceive the meaning of their lives and act accordingly.

III. CRITIQUE

Special Problems

The allusive quality of William Faulkner's work is apparent in the sermon from The Sound and the Fury. It is a poetic exhortation. Clear ideas, however, are communicated in this form. The substance of these will be found in the paraphrases which are given below.

Sermon²¹

When de long cold
 when de long cold
 dey passed away in Egypt
 de generations passed away
 Wus a rich man: whar he now?
 Wus a po man: whar he now?
 When de long, cold years
 rolls away!²²

Dey'll come a time
 Po sinner saying Let me
 lay down my load²³

Paraphrase

All those who have gone
 before us have died.

Death comes to each of us.
 To me!

²¹I have altered punctuation, italics, and deletion marks. Line arrangements are also mine.

²²Cf. ante, p. 50, lines 7-13.

²³Cf. ante, p. 50, lines 14-16.

with the act of remembering. It is a way of saying that Jesus Christ died for us, a fact we are to remember. The remembering is not passive; it is joined with the awareness of personal possession: "I got,"³⁰ "Is you got,"³¹ and "de arisen dead what got."³² God's action in making the blood sacrifice of his son is to be remembered and actively grasped or felt to be personally effective.

The second aspect of the sermon which expresses the redemptive action of God in Christ is more explicit than the first. The preacher declares that he sees Calvary, "wid de sacred trees . . . I hears de weepin en de cryin en de turnt-away face of God . . ."³³ This is, of course, the crucifixion scene made visual and auditory. Note the power of the phrase, "I hears . . . de turnt-away face of God."³⁴

God's love and purpose. The sermon of Preacher Shegog does not deal specifically or allusively with the love of God or his purpose in history. The one possible point of contact occurs in the references to history: "De passed away in Egypt, de swingin chariots; de generations passed away."³⁵ But the theme is death and it is used to impress the hearer with his mortality, not to show God's purpose in history.

Judgment and mercy. The sermon treats the themes of judgment and mercy without using the words. Dilsey had hoped for a sermon with the sound of judgment in it: "Whut dey needs is a man kin put de fear of

³⁰Cf. ante, p. 50, lines 3,6. ³¹Cf. ante, p. 50, line 17.

³²Cf. ante, p. 51, lines 47,48. ³³Cf. ante, p. 51, lines 32-36.

³⁴Cf. ante, p. 51, lines 35,36. ³⁵Cf. ante, p. 50, lines 8,9.

God into dese here triflin young niggers."³⁶ The Rev'un Shegog spelled out God's judgment and mercy in two descriptive words, "po sinner."³⁷ He tells them nothing about the fires of hell to which they might be consigned but in those words he expresses pity for their inevitable loss of "de resurrection en de light."³⁸

Compassion. The preacher uses the terms "brethren" (or "bred-dren"),³⁹ "Breddren en sistuhn,"⁴⁰ (or "sistuhn"), and "po sinner"⁴¹ (or "blind sinner," or "O sinner"). There are nineteen such references in the sermon. They evoke a common identity, a compassionate family feeling. There is no distinction between the sinner and the brethren; the terms appear to be interchangeable.

The sermon does not treat compassion discursively; it speaks within the context of compassion.

A new humanity. The compassionate sense-of-the-family discussed above holds also for the topic of the new humanity joined with Christ. This is not the preacher's main concern, however. As a topic, the new humanity refers to the quality of life which one uniquely experiences as a Christian. Rev'un Shegog is dealing with the moment of decision: he asks the brethren if they are assured of their salvation. He has

³⁶Faulkner, op. cit., p. 306. ³⁷Cf. ante, p. 50, line 8.

³⁸Cf. ante, pp. 50-51, lines 1-3, 7, 10, 14, 19, 24, 31, 42, 43, 46.

³⁹Cf. ante, pp. 50-51, lines 2, 5, 11, 14, 16, 38.

⁴⁰Cf. ante, pp. 50-51, lines 8, 15, 38, 43.

⁴¹Cf. ante, p. 51, lines 43, 44.

nothing to say on the kind of life which marks the Christian man after conversion.

Theological Summary

It is not unusual to read religious and Christian interpretations of Faulkner's work. Randall Stewart speaks for one school of thought when he calls Faulkner a Christian writer:

Faulkner embodies and dramatizes the basic Christian concepts so effectively that he can with justice be regarded as one of the most profoundly Christian writers in our time. There is everywhere in his writings the basic premise of Original Sin: everywhere the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. One finds also the necessity of discipline, of trial by fire in the furnace of affliction, of sacrifice and the sacrificial death, of redemption through sacrifice.⁴²

Not all Christian writers would concur with this judgment. Commenting on Stewart's Christianizing of Faulkner, Cleanth Brooks says:

Perhaps it would be safer to say that Faulkner is a profoundly religious writer; that his characters come out of a Christian environment, and represent whatever their shortcomings and whatever their theological heresies, Christian concerns; and that they are finally to be understood only by reference to Christian premises.⁴³

Clearly, Faulkner is no doctrinaire religionist. Camus even questions his depth of thought, seeing him as a variant in the American Tradition of novelists who describe

. . . men by their outside appearances, in their most casual actions of reproducing, without comment, everything they say down to their repetitions, and finally by acting as if men were entirely defined by their daily automatisms. . . . This technique is called realistic only owing to a misapprehension. . . . It is born of a mutilation,

⁴²Quoted in Cleanth Brooks, The Hidden God (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 22.

⁴³Ibid., p. 22.

of a voluntary mutilation, performed on reality. The unity thus obtained is a degraded unity, a leveling off of human beings and of the world.⁴⁴

In a footnote to this comment on the American novel, Camus says that Faulkner only reproduces the "outer husk of thought."⁴⁵

These critical comments on Faulkner have bearing on the conclusions one may responsibly draw from the gospel content of the sermon by the Rev'un Shegog.

I indicated earlier that the context and substance of the sermon had both a surrealistic and apocalyptic quality. The sermon does not depend upon rational processes for its appeal. It speaks from within the emotional context of the people. It is heavy with the truncated gospel familiar to his congregation. The doctrinal limitation of the sermon is that it in no way deals with the real life situation of the hearer. Like Paneloux, Shegog has no doctrine of incarnation: unlike Paneloux, Shegog's sermon conveys the compassionate relation between God and the sinner.

Salvation is a matter of being prepared for heaven. The power and the glory which Dilsey sees are not of this world. They only make this world endurable. Thus the gospel content of the sermon, like the view of man and the world, suffers from being falsely realistic. The gospel is leveled off, as are man and the world, the people being spoken to as disembodied souls, and the world being avoided entirely in the pursuit of salvation which prepares one for heaven.

⁴⁴Albert Camus, The Rebel (New York: Knopf, 1956), p. 265.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 265.

Homiletical Summary

The chief contribution of Shegog's sermon to the contemporary preacher lies in the intimacy of his relationship with his hearers.

Communication is immediate. Faulkner says the congregation

. . . forgot his insignificant appearance in the virtuosity with which he ran and poised and swooped upon the cold inflectionless wire of his voice . . . the congregation sighed as if it waked from a collective dream and moved a little in its seats.⁴⁶

That was but the beginning. As the sermon progressed

. . . the congregation seemed to watch with its own eyes while the voice consumed him, until he was nothing and they were nothing and there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another in changing measures beyond the need for words . . .⁴⁷

The preacher's very body becomes an instrument of communication. He walks back and forth "a meagre figure, hunched over upon itself like one long immured in striving with the implacable earth . . ."⁴⁸ Thus the workers in the fields see him as a projection of themselves, shrivelled by toil. And the bent body of the preacher becomes a servant of his voice, nourishing it for proclamation.⁴⁹

It is this total identity of the person with the message that adds the element to the sermon which was not present in its wording. The formal analysis of the sermon revealed a lack of a sense of the incarnation, however, the manner and style of the proclamation, with body, voice, and immediacy of communication, demonstrates the presence of Christ among them. The preacher repeatedly states his credentials,

⁴⁶Faulkner, op. cit., p. 309.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 310.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 310.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 310.

saying that the gospel is "recollected" in him, brought up to date, gathered up and made present. With this is the assertion that he has the sacrificial blood. Shegog himself occupies the incarnational role. He speaks to his congregation as though they were his own children, warming them with his all-encompassing affection and inviting them to share a relationship to God which is securely lodged in him, though he never points only to himself.

The power of the sermon lies in the "unity of the flash of recognition,"⁵⁰ the identity between the congregation and the preacher.

⁵⁰Camus, op. cit., p. 265.

CHAPTER V

HURRY SUNDOWN¹

Introduction to the Novel

K. G. Gilden has given an interpretation of the current racial crisis in the novel Hurry Sundown. It is a long novel, 1102 pages, and its material is both fictional and frankly documentary to the social issues of the late 1940's. "Is not the pastness of the past the pro-founder, the completer, the more legendary, the more immediately before the present it falls?"² It is an informative social commentary in the tradition of Gone with the Wind and The Grapes of Wrath.

Summary

Rad McDowell, citizen of Arcady, Georgia, returned from World War II to pick up life where he left it. By some standards it is not much of a life. A small farmer, he owns a piece of land with its unkempt buildings set incongruously and obtrusively in a large syndicate farm development. Memories and pride keep him there despite pressure from the syndicate to sell out and leave. He refuses to depart his land with its stretch of river. Here he grew up and here he will live with his wife and family. He returns from the war full of plans to develop his land, determined to make a good life, the kind he has dreamed

¹K. B. Gilden, Hurry Sundown (New York: The New American Library, 1964). (K. B. Gilden is the name adopted by Katya and Bert Gilden for their joint literary efforts.)

²Ibid., frontispiece, p. 5.

of and fought for overseas.

Rad is not the only property owner holding out against the company farm. There is one other, a Negro, Reeve Scott. The Scott's land had been deeded to them by their master during slave days before the Civil War. It is also the place of Reeve's long dreams. Like his neighbor, Rad, Reeve survived the terrors and frustrations of war by thinking about his Georgia home:

"Say Georgia" . . . "tell us about Georgia . . ."

This was the cue Reeve had been waiting for.

"You see, we got this little homeplace down Georgia. Mornings you wake up and go down to the river and tie a string around your big toe and plop! A big juicy bream jumps right into your lap. Get tired of fresh-water fish you jump into your little old bateau . . . and you take off for the sound. Pull up a string of mullet, drum, snapper, and on the way back you pole up a creek out there in the marshes and pull up a catfish trap plumb full of bullheads. Get tired of fish, take your shotgun out to Campion Hummock, deer, partridge, quail, running around all over. . . ."

He lay on his pallet on the floor . . . full of thoughts, memories, yearnings, tinglings, agonies, aching to express it, communicate it, lay it out before someone like a gift.³

The memories of a good life back home which sustained Rad and Reeve during war-time do not prepare them for the realities of their return. A color line separates them though they are only a fence strand apart. They plowed shoulder to shoulder without speaking.⁴ Their town, Arcady, thinks of them as partners since they are frequently seen together shopping for supplies, working their land, and holding out against the propositions of the company farm. Reeve's color is not compensated by his years of military service; he is resented for

³Ibid., pp. 269-70.

⁴Ibid., p. 274.

aggressiveness about his land: "Now looka here, nigger-boy, just cause you wearin' that there uniform . . ." ⁵

For all their surface segregation, Rad and Reeve have hidden bonds formed when they were childhood playmates and deepened by the relationship which they share as adults. They have common enemies, the syndicate farm and the local townspeople. These forces finally prove stronger than the color barrier and they openly work together. Under the guidance of a Negro agronomist and a white Episcopal priest, Rad and Reeve became leaders in a movement for agricultural reform involving red-neck farmers and Negro share-croppers alike. What none could do individually was successfully accomplished through combined effort.

Their success was costly. It shifted the weight of political power and thus set the influential people of the town against them. Their unwillingness to sell land to the corporation farm became intolerable to its local manager. In one disastrous day their houses and farmlands, their program for agricultural reform and their hopes for the future are drowned.

Themes

The dominant theme in the book is the struggle of the individual to retain his dignity and achieve his goals in a society in which entrenched traditions work against the individual's desire to rise. Rad McDowell and Reeve Scott bear the burden of this struggle. The action of the novel centers around the attempt to help Rad and Reeve keep their land and develop it profitably and the attempt to thwart their plans.

⁵Ibid., p. 280.

The struggle of the Negro to achieve his rights in a white dominated society deepens this theme:

Who knows how we are being killed day by day, in how many different forms they kill us? Pressures of the heart, anxieties of the stomach. Creeping malignancies. Hookworm sucking the blood. Malnutrition of the mind. Tuberculosis of the spirit. Alcoholic narcosis. The eternal elastic band stretched to the breaking point: Striving and frustration, striving and frustration. Tears disguised as jest and jest decked out in motley, painted and masked.⁶

The effort to throw off the white man's yoke is considered hopeless even by the liberal members of the Negro community. "You two guys kill me, you really do! . . . Going on as if nothing is wrong here . . . when it's all just about to be snatched out from under you."⁷

The Negro's place in society is complicated further by ambivalent attitudes between white and colored people. Rose Scott, Reeve's aged mother, reminds her family that she has suckled her own baby on one breast and her master's baby on the other. There is a bond between Julie-Ann Colfax and her old Negro nurse:

Impulsively Julie reached over and touched the shadow-grooved cheek. Rose seized her wrist with unexpected strength and held her hand against her face. In that instant they both knew that this was the way it really was between them, no matter what anyone else might claim.⁸

This intimacy, however, is used by Julie to ease Rose off her property. That attempt finally closes the door between Julie and Rose. Rose's last words to Julie were bitter: "Some people light a lamp . . . just to put it out."⁹

A further elaboration of theme is the issue of personal integrity

⁶Ibid., p. 251.

⁷Ibid., p. 120.

⁸Ibid., p. 153.

⁹Ibid., p. 158.

is an impersonal, profit-motivated society. Henry Warren, manager of the syndicate farm, Sunset Hill, embodies the insensitive, uncomplicated and amoral attitudes necessary to those who rise to positions of responsibility in the economic structures of society.

He had an instinct . . . for what was useful to him, a mind that seized on whatever was necessary for him to retain and discarded the rest like a picker stripping leaves from the fruit. And whatever he didn't know he brazened out.¹⁰

His attitude at times terrified his wife, Julia, who cried out that he was not Christian, not human, when he said things like: "In this world, Julia, it's only results that count. You got to grab the steer by the horns and throw it."¹¹

Sensitive and brilliant men caught in the same system at higher levels must make the same compromises. They pay the price in ulcers and personal tragedy and they have to develop more sophisticated reasons for their decisions. Philip Elwell, son-in-law to a man of unlimited wealth, roving ambassador for the United States, gifted engineer of hydro-electric and agricultural schemes and equally gifted engineer of human consent, gives a modest autobiography:

"We are each a prisoner of his own position--"

.
"We can't run away from what we are born to."

.
"There was a time . . . when I was all out to kick over convention like the lantern in Mrs. O'Leary's barn. . . . Believe me, I've seen it, I know, it's no good kicking over the lantern, the traces or anything else. Rebellions always end up on the ash heap."

.
". . . in other words, you accept your role and master it."¹² . . .

¹⁰Ibid., p. 43.

¹¹Ibid., p. 223.

¹²Ibid., pp. 82-83.

Elwell accepts his role masterfully. He translates Latin poetry for relaxation while changing the face of the earth, meanwhile destroying individuals, like Rad and Reeve, without knowing they exist.

Against this loss of personal integrity is cast one white man, the priest, Clement DeLavery. The non-conforming son of a bishop, suspect because of his affiliation with pink-tinged student groups, highly motivated to serve human needs where he finds them, Clem organizes and instructs a farm class for veterans while serving two Episcopal parishes one white, the other Negro.

. . . To me, the church is a conscious effort, an organized effort by men to make of themselves something better than they otherwise would be. Somebody has got to say these things, somebody has got to fight for this . . ."¹³

What he fights for is the right of Rad and Reeve to hold their property and improve their lot in life, the easing of racial tensions through closer contact between his congregations and the alleviation of the suffering of poor people in his parishes. He is warned: "They'll tramp you down, they'll drive you out. . . ."¹⁴ Clem sees the issues clearly and writes in his notebook: "Is the lot of our generation to be emasculated by expediency?"¹⁵

Father DeLavery's efforts have their own rewards. He is respected. Julie defends Clem: ". . . I'm quite satisfied that what we have in our own home church is as fine a Christian leader as you'll find anywhere."¹⁶ But neither the community nor the congregation can accept his leadership in social reform. He is dismissed from his teaching post

¹³Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 452.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 356.

in the veterans' class and his vestry requests his resignation "for the good of the congregation, the church, and the country."¹⁷

II. THE SERMON

Setting

There are references to several sermons by the Reverend Clement DeLavery in Hurry Sundown. The one which is given with some completeness¹⁸ is delivered to a congregation divided by the activities in which their pastor has taken an active role. The immediate issue is the withdrawal of Judge Purcell from active participation in worship. A life-long member of St. Paul's parish, he is grievously offended when Clem passes him a communion cup out of which a Negro has just drunk. The Judge spits in the cup.¹⁹ Clem's vestry responds by requesting their pastor to secure an apology from the Negro for being present at communion. Clem refuses. The division in the congregation bodes ill for him. His mother, the widow of a bishop, has suffered through her son's innumerable mistakes and is soon to witness another, his sermon. His wife, Nancy, after the sermon would ask, "Clem? You sure you doing the right thing?" and he would answer, "Lord knows I don't have any monopoly on righteousness. But yes, Nancy, this is right."²⁰

¹⁷Ibid., p. 1102.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 415-16.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 173.

²⁰Ibid., p. 90.

SERMON IV*

Text: The voice of thy brother's blood crieth from the ground.

1 "'Where is thy brother Abel?'"

2 "'How shall I know? Why ask me? He's not my responsibility.'
3 And who was it gave this answer when asked where his brother was?
4 He who had by his land slain him! And thus in this tale of two
5 brothers, the crime of fratricide and the crime of indifference
6 have been eternally made one in the minds of men."

.

7 "As you know, the ethic of our bombing Hiroshima and
8 Nagasaki, especially the latter, has often troubled me. In the
9 past few weeks I have been much occupied with the first legal
10 reports issued by denazification courts in Germany. I am not
11 speaking now of the bombing of cities or even of army pitted
12 against army. I am speaking of the slaughter, the murder, the
13 fratricide of six million innocents, by hand, by order, and by
14 the complicity of indifference."

15 "How could such a crime have occurred in our age? How
16 could civilized men, men not unlike us, reared like us in Christian
17 teaching, how could they have been capable of participating in it?
18 How was it possible? In order that we may recognize the road that
19 led to the gas chambers, I would like to quote to you a few
20 excerpts from this article."

.

21 Then he began to read aloud the Nuremberg Race Laws. Each
22 of us alive today bears branded upon our soul the question: Where
23 is my brother? Each of us bears the guilt: My brother's blood
24 crieth from the ground. And each of us daily must ask of ourselves:
25 What can I do to purge my conscience of this sin, how expiate it?"

*Sermon by the Reverend Clement DeLavery in K. G. Gilden, Hurry Sundown (New York: The New American Library, 1964), pp. 415-16.

Theme

"Where is thy brother Abel?" "How shall I know? Why ask me? He's not my responsibility." These are Clem's first words and they point to the theme but do not state it. They are given in an off-hand manner. ". . . innocuous enough, rendered in the understated undertone that he habitually used."²¹

". . . in this tale of two brothers, the crime of fratricide and the crime of indifference have been eternally made one in the minds of men."²² This is Clem's theme, i.e., indifference has criminal consequences. The remaining words of the sermon reinforce this single idea. They are supporting illustrations of fratricide. What we have of the sermon are two accounts, one is the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the other is the killing ". . . of six million innocents . . . by the complicity of indifference"²³ in Germany.

The sermon closes as it began with a question: "Each of us bears the guilt: My brother's blood crieth from the ground. And each of us daily must ask of ourselves: What can I do to purge my conscience of this sin, how expiate it?"²⁴

Relation between Sermon and Novel

As we have seen, there are three themes in the novel. The first and dominant theme is the struggle of the individual to retain his dignity and achieve his goals in a society pitted against him. The second

²¹Ibid., p. 415.

²²Cf. ante, p. 69, lines 4-6. ²³Cf. ante, p. 69, lines 13,14.

²⁴Cf. ante, p. 69, lines 23-25.

is the struggle of the Negro to achieve his rights. The third is the issue of personal integrity in an impersonal, profit-motivated society. The sermon deals with the first of these indirectly; implicitly, it refers to the struggle of the Negro for his rights and the white man's unwillingness to help his brother; and, explicitly, it deals with the last. Clem's closing question is one which calls for personal action: "What can I do to purge my conscience . . ." ²⁵ Thus the sermon is an integral part of the novel.

III. CRITIQUE

Special Problems

The brevity of the sermon militates against an extensive analysis. There is simply not enough material to know precisely what Father DeLavery delivered.

Gospel Content

Redemption. The sermon delivered by the Reverend Clement DeLavery, in the novel Hurry Sundown, does not include the words "God," "Jesus," or "Christ." Reference to God is presupposed in the text: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth from the ground." This is a misquotation from Genesis 4:10 in the Authorized Version which reads: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." In either case, however, the statement implies God as its source and the authority of God is invoked.

²⁵ Cf. ante, p. 69, line 25.

There is no reference to God's redemptive activity in Christ, either implicit or explicit in the sermon.

God's love and purpose. The sermon is delivered during a time of intense racial conflict. It is a sermon about brotherhood. The witness of the sermon is that brotherhood, not fratricide, is God's purpose for man.

The sermon refers to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the slaughter of Jews in Germany.²⁶ These citations are made out of the unstated assumption that they violate God's purpose for man. "How could civilized men, men not unlike us, reared like us in Christian teaching, how could they have been capable of participating in it?"²⁷

God's judgment and mercy. The note of judgment in the sermon is dominant. The following statements convey judgment:

. . . The crime of fratricide and the crime of indifference have been eternally made one . . .

. . . the slaughter, the murder, . . . by hand, by order, and by the complicity of indifference.

. . . a crime by . . . men not unlike us . . .

Each of us bears the guilt: My brother's blood crieth from the ground.²⁸

Father DeLavery, despite the "undertone that he habitually used"²⁹ communicates judgment rather than mercy. The sermon closes with a question about man's activity on his own behalf: "What can I do to purge my

²⁶Cf. ante, p. 69, lines 7,8. ²⁷Cf. ante, p. 69, line 17.

²⁸Cf. ante, p. 69, lines 5,6; 12-14; 16; 23,24 (*italics mine*).

²⁹Ibid., p. 415.

conscience of this sin, how expiate it?"³⁰ The question remains unanswered, and God's acceptance of the sinner is not conveyed.

Compassion. The need for compassion in human relationships is expressed in the sermon. The opening words are directed to the person who is avoiding his responsibility to his brothers in the human family. "How shall I know? Why ask me? He's not my responsibility."³¹ Compassion is being expressed on the human level only. "Mercy, forgiveness, unmerited favor and help,"³² qualities of divine compassion at work between God and man are not conveyed.

The new humanity. "How could civilized men, men not unlike us, reared like us in Christian teaching, how could they have been capable of participating . . . in the murder . . . of six million innocent people?"³³ In this central question of the sermon it is presupposed that persons who are civilized, not to say Christian, would be incapable of participating in such outrage. This is as close as the sermon comes to expressing the quality of life which marks the Christian.

Theological Summary

The message of the sermon is the statement that we are all involved in the crime of Cain. We struggle still with the problem of repaying our debt to those we have wronged.

Working strictly within the bounds of the sermon, one must say

³⁰ Cf. ante, p. 69, line 25.

³¹ Cf. ante, p. 69, line 2.

³² Cf. ante, p. 5.

³³ Cf. ante, p. 69, lines 15-17.

that it hardly qualifies as a vehicle to convey the Christian gospel. The problems of sinful men in a sinful society are clearly conveyed, but the means of redemption is not. The blame for current problems is placed upon indifferent men; the only redemptive proposal is that of purging and expiation. After hearing the problem stated and hearing it illustrated by historical events, the congregation is invited to consider what can be done about expiation; no proposal appears in the sermon.

Homiletical Summary

Nowhere in this study is the context more important to the understanding of a sermon than it is in this selection from Hurry Sundown. The sermon removed from its setting is a pathetic attempt at communication of the gospel. Within the total context of Father DeLavery's work the sermon is a powerful and explosive device.

The immediate situation in Father DeLavery's congregation is that a Negro parishoner has offended a white judge by drinking from the same chalice from which he is to receive the sacrament. Father DeLavery, in the ensuing controversy, has refused to secure an apology from the Negro. The judge has withdrawn from the church. The pastor's sermon, without mentioning the incident, puts it in its largest possible context as one occasion of fratricide among millions of others. The particulars of the actions of his members do not have to be mentioned since they are already within the immediate experience of his congregation. The experience then adds vitality to the sermon without one word being spoken about it. Potentially, at least, it is a highly communicative silence which the pastor maintains on the subject.

Further, Father DeLavery's appeal--to find a means of purgation and expiation--is left unanswered in the sermon for the same reason that no mention is made of the controversy over communion. The pastor has already instituted programs for self-help which effect Negro and white sharecroppers and small farmers. The channel of expiation is available to any person whose conscience is stirred. The way out of the problem is at hand. The sermon is an example of evocative understatement.

But the sermon goes wrong.

It is a commendable homiletical procedure to avoid stating the problems to which the sermon refers if they are so clear as to need no rehearsing. It is an exciting conclusion to a sermon to have channels of service waiting at the door of the church which match the claims of consciences stirred during the sermon. It is not enough, however, to point the way or lead the way if the congregation is needlessly cut off from the adequate answers provided in the sermon. This is the problem with Father DeLavery's sermon; he gets in the way of his own message.

Clement DeLavery fails to lay claim adequately to authority from beyond himself. He frequently contrasts his good attitudes with his congregation's bad attitudes. These limitations prepare the way for ill will and misunderstanding. The personal pronouns "I," "me," and "my," occur frequently and are used in a manner which opens the door for needless reaction against the speaker rather than open acceptance of the truth he conveys. The preacher is too superior to his congregation. He tells them: "As you know, the ethic of our bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki . . . has often troubled me."³⁴ Is DeLavery the only person present who has been troubled? He goes on to say, "I have been much

occupied . . . I am not speaking now of . . . I am speaking of . . . I am not speaking now of . . . I would like to quote to you . . . What can I do . . ." ³⁵ These statements convey distance from the congregation. Add to them the substance of illustrations which imply that his congregation is not civilized, let alone Christian, ³⁶ and one has the ingredients of the revolt which followed upon the heels of the sermon.

The sermon's limitations as to gospel content have been indicated above. These were compensated, in large part, by the context of the sermon. The fundamental error lies in the failure to appreciate the substance of such comments on preaching as the following:

. . . The Sender of the message comes first in importance, and after him the substance of the message. Next in importance are the people to whom the message is addressed. The preacher comes fourth in importance. Rather, the preacher has no importance other than as an instrument, but he has great importance as an instrument. ³⁷

³⁴ Cf. ante, p. 69, lines 7,8.

³⁵ Cf. ante, p. 69, lines 9; 10,11; 12; 19; 25.

³⁶ Cf. ante, p. 69, lines 16-20.

³⁷ H. Grady Davis, Design for Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), pp. 109,110.

CHAPTER VI

HOLY MASQUERADE¹

Olov Hartman, the author of Holy Masquerade, is a pastor in the national church of Sweden and writes out of that intimate knowledge of the parish. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Tom F. Driver and others have compared him with Greene, Mauriac, and Bernanos in the treatment of his material. The novel portrays the conflict between a man who is shaped by the desire for success and his wife who struggles to achieve an authentic existence. The eyes through which we see the action in the novel and the foil for the author is the character of Klara, wife of Pastor Albert Svensson.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL

Summary

Albert Svensson is the personable, unmarried vicar of a city parish. He presents himself as modern and free:

He talks about spring on Easter Sunday and about the longing for eternity on Ascension day. He played bridge and discussed the theatre like an ordinary person . . . Everything beautiful and pathetic by prophets and heretics was mixed together in a single soup.²

That he is a man in other dimensions Klara is soon to discover. He seduces her--"I was also reassured," she wrote, "by the fact that Albert loved me in precisely the same way as a worldling."³ If he did

¹Olov Hartman, Holy Masquerade (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963).

²Ibid., p. 8.

³Ibid., p. 9.

so passionately and competently she was not altogether surprised for she was aware that one does not lose one's sex either in the pulpit or in the pew. What surprises her is his lecture on morality to the youth of the parish. In it he:

quoted the words of Paul frenetically: "Flee the fleshly lusts of youth." He warned against anticipating the rights of marriage and blew the battle trumpet against all that binds us to the earthly and all that sullies our purity.⁴

For Klara this is the beginning of disillusion. When they move to a rural parish, she becomes aware that her husband "conforms himself to their ideal of a minister."⁵

Masks and stereotypes increasingly shaped Albert's life as a pastor. In the end, Klara, repulsed by them, rejects her husband. Albert then falls into an adulterous relationship with a school teacher in his parish. He explains:

When finally Klara began to deny me my matrimonial rights I was also carnally tempted. And when I found a woman near me who wished nothing more than to give me all that I desired, I could not resist. It was a difficult trial. I know that there is forgiveness for everything . . .⁶

Klara could not tolerate this liaison. She seeks the aid of a psychiatrist. His diagnosis indicates that she is reasonably well, but under stress due to her way of life.

"You are religiously undernourished."

"I? The minister's wife in Sjobo?"

"Yes, you. For it is you who are religious and not your husband. But you haven't wanted to admit this. You have repressed religion like some push aside their sexuality. Your doubt is nothing more than the negative side of your belief, as the sexual hate of the moralists is the reverse side of their libido."⁷

⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁵Ibid., p. 10.

⁶Ibid., p. 131.

⁷Ibid., p. 104.

Klara rejects the psychiatrist because he reminds her of Albert and because he has a painting of a nude in his office toward which his eyes wander too frequently. She feels that the doctor does not correctly understand the seriousness of her problem.

Klara subsequently develops a neurotic fixation upon a carved madonna and child stored in the church tower. It is while she is secretly and by candlelight contemplating the Christ child in the arms of the madonna that she sees from her vantage point her husband's intimacy with Elvira. She flees the tower. The candle she left behind in her haste ignites rubbish accumulated in the tower and soon the church is ablaze. She rushes back to the tower to save the carving and is burned so severely that she dies. The church is a total loss. Albert, who survives the losses with vacuous poise and propriety, is able to record them with objectivity. We are left to assume that he might well continue to serve a long and successful ministry.

Themes

What must one do to remain authentic? The novel traces this question within the setting of the church, and, as I have indicated, does so from the point of view of a pastor's wife. Through her we see what the church does to individuals who occupy official positions within parish life.

Authentic existence is called for in the opening paragraph of the novel. Klara, the wife of Pastor Svensson, speaks what can only be understood as a programmatic statement of the problem with which the novel deals:

I have sat in church . . . and . . . have looked as attentive and as pious as is proper for the wife of a minister. No, I have no intention to follow Jesus. I want to follow my common sense. I want to continue to be as honest as possible. What I am now doing is a kind of self-defense. I want to save my true self from this life of sewing societies and church attendance. From this life of "May God's will be done." I want to dust myself off and give it back the clean colors it used to have.⁸

The theme of authenticity is developed with reference to roles. Klara wants to be her own unique self, but her identity is lost in the "rural vicarage idyll" with its "imprisonment . . . in the fragrance of coffee and lilacs."⁹ Her very appearance was made to conform to the parishoner's image of the minister's wife.

I remember how Albert stopped me and took the lipstick away from me the first morning we came to the parish. "You can't go to the sewing society with red lips," he said. "You have to remember that you are a minister's wife, or you will be brought under judgment." I yielded--of course. . . . It is enslavement unto death to pious tradition.¹⁰

Klara hungers for authentic relations with needy parishoners and instead finds that her husband is more concerned with statistical matters and other administrative detail. On one occasion an elderly parishoner lay dying. Guilt-ridden, the old lady calls for Pastor Svensson's help. She is convinced she has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit. Albert's first visit is not effective and he does not return, despite his promise to do so. But he gives unflagging attention to office work.

No poet could give greater devotion to his poems than Albert to the data that must be submitted to the district bureau every Monday. . . . when Albert spreads himself out over this typically masculine

⁸Ibid., pp. 7,8.

⁹Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 10,11.

red tape, something in him purrs with contentment. He loves these paragraphs and forms and this multiplicity of parish records.

But when he said that it is in this way Christ can come in among men, I had to object.¹¹

While administrative detail receives Albert's careful attention, the elderly parishoner's condition worsens. Klara sets out alone to comfort her, leaving the pastor at work in his office. She finds the unfortunate woman dead.

Klara seeks theological clarity in her husband; instead she finds him at home only in roomy ambiguities of doctrine and quite incapable of stating clear positions. He never moves away from acceptable, current boundaries of theological speculation.

It is this that is worst of all. That his cruising mentality and his intellectual conscience have been welded into sheer confusion. We have had fiery partisans in the parish: pastors who sacrificed their career for the sign of the cross and other peculiarities, or who wore themselves into shreds for the ecumenical ideal. . . . But they are my type. They give me a clear answer. They seem satisfied with unpopularity and it gives them new edges. But Albert weighs diverse opinions against one another like nuts on a scale and says "Too much," "Too little." His skepticism and his faith are both a fog where it is easy to lose your way, for he is knowledgeable, if one can call knowledge that which lacks all fixity. But he will become rector on the strength of it, believe me. To me this is poison.¹²

II. THE SERMON

Setting

The novel, Holy Masquerade, is constructed as to time period within the Lenten season. The sermons referred to begin with Ash Wednesday and end with Good Friday. There is a sermon for each of the

¹¹Ibid., p. 11.

¹²Ibid., p. 41.

Sundays and for certain other occasions. Each of them is reported by Klara Svensson. The one studied here is more fully summarized in the novel than the others. None is given in full text. This particular sermon was delivered in the rural church of Skogsby.

SERMON V*

1 The Gospel for this Sunday in Lent: five thousand hungry
2 people fed when there is no food to buy . . .

3 Albert did not preach over that text. He talked about a
4 text that dealt with the denial of Peter. Peter is a very popular
5 apostle. . . . Albert talked about the temptations of the gray
6 morning. The first temptation: to deny Christ for the opportunity
7 to get into the house of the high priest and to superintend the
8 Christian interests in the world. Second temptation: to deny
9 Christ because most people are His enemies. The beloved Peter was
10 surrounded by a hostile circle of people in front of the fire.
11 Third temptation: to deny Christ to evade responsibility for what
12 one has done. The last one who made Peter fall was a relative to
13 the one whose ear Peter had chopped off.

14 Albert talked almost as if he knew what it was to deny
15 Christ. He was in it himself; . . . "Who has not at some time
16 compromised his Christianity to please the world . . . all of us
17 know how easy it is to be pulled along by the masses, to speak and
18 to act against our conscience when we are drawn and beguiled by a
19 bad example: 'Everybody is doing it' or 'That's the way it is
20 nowadays.' All of us know the persuasiveness of the voices in our
21 inner man when the evil passions hold council. . . ." It sounded
22 pretty genuine. And it was also genuine when he said, "How easy
23 it is not to fall. How persuasive is not the world." We all felt
24 sorry for Peter who was so compelled to deny. . . .

*Olov Hartman (Karl A. Olsson, trans.), Holy Masquerade (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 67-68. The sermon is given as summarized by Klara, the wife of Pastor Svensson.

Theme

In the sermon we hear Albert working out his frustrations and confessing his shortcomings. The pastor carries his congregation with him, making significant contact with them at the emotional level.

Klara, the pastor's wife, observes:

Albert talked almost as if he knew what it was to deny Christ. He was in it himself, it almost made me gasp. "Who has not at some time compromised his Christianity to please the world. . . . All of us know what it is to be pulled along by the masses . . ." It sounded pretty genuine . . . We indulged our weakness and wept a little out of sympathy for ourselves.¹³

Pastor Svensson's sermon in The Holy Masquerade deals with the subject of temptation. The point of reference is Peter's temptation after Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Three topics are developed: Peter denied Christ in order to be in a position to help Christ's cause;¹⁴ he denied Christ in order to avoid ridicule by the guards in the high priest's courtyard;¹⁵ and, he denied Christ in order to evade responsibility for being in the chief priest's courtyard.¹⁶ We are not told how Albert developed these topics. From the pastor's wife, Klara, however, we learn how he applied the sermon. Albert applied Peter's temptation to the situation of his hearers by telling them in a very convincing way that it is hard for a Christian to resist temptation. Peter denied Christ and so may we all, he tells them.¹⁷

The emphasis of the sermon falls on this last point, namely, the

¹³Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁴Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 6-8.

¹⁵Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 8-10. ¹⁶Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 11-13.

¹⁷Hartman, op. cit., p. 68.

extreme difficulty of resisting temptation. Klara observes: "We all felt sorry for Peter who was so compelled to deny."¹⁸

Relation between Sermon and Novel

Regarding the role of the sermon in each of the novels under discussion, I have suggested earlier that the sermon, by its brief compass and special character, may provide the novelist with a vehicle in which to convey his message. If that is true for some novels under discussion, it is not the case here. The sermon does not deal with the themes of the novel. It is a device which illumines the character of Albert.

The sermon has its own authentic ring. As an instrument in the hands of the novelist, however, it is no more than an episode, one of many, revealing facets of Albert's character.

The message of the novel is that the procedural matters in parish life and the social niceties required of the pastor get in the way of the religious life. Thus, essentially irreligious men can become successful pastors. These ordained parish technicians may drive sensitive and spiritually hungry persons to distraction. The sermon does not deal with that theme, but records a reflective moment in the pastor's public ministry. The sermon deals with the problem of temptation, not authenticity. Thus it does not engage the novel's theme.

¹⁸Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 23,24.

III. CRITIQUE

Special Problems

Because of the author's technique of relaying the sermon through the mind of Klara, the sermon lacks sufficient substance to give the thorough analysis which we might wish. It is brief at best. The novel explores the character of Pastor Svensson and that of the typical parish in such detail that some projection beyond the actual sermon may be made.

Gospel Content

Redemption. While the sermon does not specifically speak of the redemptive activity of God in Christ, we may safely assume that it speaks from within the accepted position of the church in which Albert Svensson serves. References to Christ are frequent.¹⁹ The burden of the sermon is the pastor's concern that denial is at once tragic and easy.

God's love and purpose. The awareness of God's presence and purpose in history is absent from the sermon. References to contemporary society occur twice: "'Everybody is doing it' or 'That's the way it is nowadays.'"²⁰ Neither reference has any substantive contribution to make to the discussion of God's purposes in human history.

¹⁹Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 6,9,11,15.

²⁰Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 19,20.

Judgment and mercy. The sermon attempts to illumine the problem of temptation, presumably to strengthen the congregation against yielding. The congregation is left to infer that to yield is to fall under judgment. But in Albert's view, judgment is tempered. His own adultery is covered by the grace of God, "I know there is forgiveness for everything . . ."²¹ The topic, however, remains undeveloped in the sermon.

Compassion. The portrayal of the sermon which we have from Klara indicates that God ought to be compassionate, if only because his children are practically ". . . compelled to deny . . ." Christ.²² After describing the temptations of Peter, the sermon deals with the universality of temptation and compromise. "Who has not at some time compromised his Christianity to please the world?"²³ Again, the topic is undeveloped in the sermon.

The new humanity. The quality of life which is to mark the believer is not attractively presented in the novel and it is not mentioned in the sermon. The church seeks its own life; the people function out of inherited and unchanging definitions of piety, and spiritually undernourished individuals find little to commend the church as a means of meeting the needs for a new life. Instead, the quality of life within the church is an extension of socially acceptable behavior outside the church except that the church has its own institutional language and customs.

²¹Hartman, op. cit., p. 131. ²²Cf. ante, p. 83, line 24.

²³Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 15,16.

Theological Summary

The single message of the sermon is that it is difficult to avoid compromising one's Christianity.²⁴ In the terms of the sermon this means that it is difficult to avoid denying Christ. Peter's denial occurs under three kinds of circumstances, each of which is understandable to us. The first situation is one in which Peter places himself in temptation's way while trying to influence favorable action regarding Christ's work in the world. In that instance, Peter is simply trying to get past the guards into the house of the high priest when he runs into the situation out of which comes the first denial.²⁵ The second denial comes about when Peter feels the desire to be accepted by other people. He had wanted to warm himself at the fire and it was important to be inconspicuous. Since the group was hostile to Christ, he had to share their hostility in order to remain undetected. Thus an innocent purpose leads to denial.²⁶ The third temptation to deny Christ comes when we evade responsibility for what we have done. Peter's speech betrays him and a relative of the man Peter had wounded in the Garden of Gethsemane questions him about it. To make himself safe, Peter falls into his third denial.²⁷

The pastor has explored the temptations of Peter and evoked our sympathy for Peter and for all Christians caught in compromising circumstances. No proposals are forthcoming in the sermon about dealing with our potential apostacy.

²⁴Cf. ante, p. 83, line 16. ²⁵Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 6-8.

²⁶Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 9-10. ²⁷Cf. ante, p. 83, lines 11-13.

The sermon properly falls within the type of Christian communication designated "therapy, speech for the purpose of effecting some improvement in the hearer, some change in his state or condition, mental, emotional or religious."²⁸ Regardless of the type of Christian communication which is employed, however, when

. . . Christians teach, they will not teach some other thing than this gospel. When they exhort, the exhortation will not rest on lower grounds than this.

.
This is to say that the New Testament recognizes no difference between preaching and teaching, so far as content is concerned. The difference is only in the form this message takes in proclamation.²⁹

Therapeutic speech must include the five elements of proclamation that are the basis for the theological evaluations in this study. Pastor Svensson's sermon, even if it is a "more or less informal discussion of various aspects of Christian life . . . addressed to a congregation already established in the faith"³⁰ comes short of stating the gospel.

Homiletical Summary

The sermon in Holy Masquerade is a useful illustration in that it offers a model of inadequate preaching.

The first indication we have that Pastor Svensson's sermon is amiss comes with the reading of the text. The season is Lent. The congregation hears a reading from the gospels about the feeding of the five

²⁸H. Grady Davis, Design for Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), p. 127.

²⁹Ibid., p. 109.

³⁰C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 8.

thousand, followed by a litany which is unrelated to the scripture lesson. In turn, the sermon deals with a text unrelated to either. After the sermon Klara observes: "I thought the mixture a bit strange."³¹

The second difficulty in the sermon is that the theme of denial is explored in such a way as to fragment the listener's response rather than bring it to focus. The sermon has a subject but it has no central, generative idea to offer about the subject.³² It says nothing beyond the recounting of Peter's temptation and the awareness that we too are tempted. This is in contrast to the sermons discussed thus far.

Gabriel Grimes told his congregation that they were all sinners and the answer to their sinfulness was to tremble before God and obey. Father Paneloux told his congregation that the calamity they experienced was God's instrument for salvation and their response should be obedience and love. Rev'un Shegog instructed his congregation that salvation depends on the personal assurance of grace. Thus each sermon presents not only a topic, but one clear idea; not only a subject but a predicate.

Finally, Pastor Svensson fails to tell his congregation what to do about denial or to describe how God's grace is effective despite denial, or how one grows in the midst of it. The responsibility of the preacher to deal with the redemptive quality of the gospel may be described as follows:

The preacher is not repeating, over and over again, an ancient chronicle; he is bearing witness to the quality and significance of a new communal life in which God is making available to us a new health and salvation. His preaching is an ellipse moving about the two foci of the ancient event and the always new life of the Spirit.

³¹ Hartman, op. cit., p. 68.

³² Davis, op. cit., p. 21.

. . . To hold the two elements together in their full integrity and distinctive force, but to hold them together, is the basic problem of preaching.³³

The consequences of Pastor Svensson's inadequate development of the sermon are seen in the reactions of his hearers. At an elaborate coffee after the service, Klara shares her feeling that their excessive eating and the elaborateness of the display of pastries amounts to one more denial of Christ, to add to the three denials of Peter discussed by the pastor. It was the topic of Lenten self-denial that remained unresolved in her mind. She moved from Peter's denial of Christ to the Christian's complacency and failure to do more than talk about self-denial. She "wondered if it were right for us to eat cookies in such masses when there were children who had to look for their breakfast in the garbage cans."³⁴

While the preacher cannot take responsibility for the direction his thoughts will take when set loose in the hearers' minds, he does have the responsibility to set a clear direction. Klara is trying to do something with the idea presented by the pastor. His ideas do not come through with sufficient clarity to give her thoughts and conduct a firm basis.

In its lack of gospel content, its unresolved conflict of subject matter, its failure to develop a single idea out of his subject and to communicate the redemptive message of the gospel, Pastor Svensson's sermon is inadequate.

³³John Knox, The Integrity of Preaching (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 22.

³⁴Hartman, op. cit., p. 71.

CHAPTER VII

A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN¹

The story of Stephen Dedalus' coming of age is a work of genius; it must be experienced on its own terms. An introduction to the work may be best given by the author himself.

The classical temper . . . ever mindful of limitation chooses . . . to bend upon these present things and so work upon them and fashion them that the quick intelligence may go beyond them to their meaning which is still unuttered.²

The exploration of this unuttered meaning has produced a body of literature which is extensive; bibliographies have become a study in themselves. One significance of Portrait is that it may provide the key to the remainder of Joyce's work.³ Here, however, we are concerned only with the novel and with one of the four sermons written within it.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL

Summary

Stephen Dedalus, precocious child of an ambiguous family, grows up. We trace him from childhood prattle to his entry upon a career in

¹James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: Viking Press, 1964).

²Quoted in Stanley Romaine Hopper (ed.), Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 37.

³Robert S. Ryf, A New Approach to Joyce (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), pp. 1-2.

the arts. The pilgrimage between these two points is solitary and tortuous.

So far as Stephen's conscious participation is concerned, his pilgrimage begins with a quest for identity, beset, like the rest of his experience, with enigma:

Stephen Dedalus
Class of Elements
Clongowes Wood College
Sallins
County Kildare
Ireland
The World
The Universe ⁴

This should have been sufficient but Stephen did not find it so. "What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything round the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began?"⁵ He did not know.

His school was Jesuit. There he learned about religion, sickness, bad drama, cruelty, authority, punishment, and isolation. He also learned the rhythms of school life and of his own existence.

During school holidays he returned to his home with its colorful and rowdy table talk and its forays into politics and religion. There it was he heard old Mr. Casey cry out that Ireland was priest-ridden and God-forsaken. "Away with God!" cried Mr. Casey, to the shock and

⁴Joyce, op. cit., p. 15.

⁵Ibid., p. 16. Special problems occur in quoting Joyce. Dialogue is introduced without quotation marks and certain passages are italicized. For clarity I have inserted quotation marks in dialogue passages. Spelling also is unique. Many Catholic terms are not capitalized. Except in direct quotations, I have capitalized according to current usage.

despair of the pious women of the home.⁶ And there he learned that all was not well with his father and his family. He heard obscure hints of trouble and quick reassurance that all would be well. What was wrong? He was frightened and felt alone. The trouble was real enough though never explained as the years passed. Stephen's time at home, short or long, ever found his family being reduced from respected idiosyncrasy to clamorous squalor.

The family loss of identity hurt and hardened Stephen in his loneliness. Among his father's cronies:

His mind seemed older than theirs. . . . He had known neither the pleasure of companionship with others nor the vigour of rude male health nor filial piety. Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys, and he was drifting amid life like the barren shell of the moon.⁷

An early exile, Stephen tried to reach out to family and friends. With money earned for an essay, he feasted them and gave them gifts but could establish no lasting nearness to them. He was driven, then, by "the fierce longings of his heart"⁸ to the brothels of Dublin. He came and went again and again, revelling in an agony of release and remorse.

In the course of his lustings four powerful sermons shook his Catholic soul. The awe of holy things and holy places had never left him and never would. Much later its power is still upon him:

"But why do you fear a bit of bread?"

"I imagine," Stephen said, "That there is a malevolent reality behind those things I say I fear."

.....

⁶Ibid., p. 37.

⁷Ibid., p. 96.

⁸Ibid., p. 98.

" . . . I fear more than that the chemical action which would be set up in my soul by a false homage to a symbol behind which are massed twenty centuries of authority and veneration."⁹

Those sermons, heard in his sixteenth year, came to a soul both experienced in the ways of sin and tender toward the call of righteousness. Hell was palpable in those sermons. Stephen fled it with all the sensitive devotion of which his considerable powers were capable. He was scarcely stopped short of holy orders. Something in the face of the old Jesuit who wanted to claim him for the priesthood bade him stop. The visage of the priest

. . . was that of a mirthless mask reflecting a sunken day. . . . It was a grave and passionless life that awaited him.

Some instinct . . . stronger than education or piety, quickened within him at every near approach to that life, an instinct subtle and hostile, and armed him against acquiescence. . . . He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world.

The snares of the world were its ways of sin. He would fall.¹⁰

Stephen's entrance upon university life is marked with a certitude which is insufferable if not "sinister."¹¹ He would be an artist! For that he must be apart from others! He now embraced the solitary life. "You're a terrible man, Stevie" . . . "always alone."¹²

"I do not fear to be alone or to be spurned for another or to leave whatever I have to leave. And I am not afraid to make a mistake, even a great mistake, a lifelong mistake and perhaps as long as eternity too."¹³

⁹Ibid., p. 243.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 162.

¹¹Italo Svevo's characterization of Dedalus. Quoted in William T. Noon, S.J., Joyce and Aquinas (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 1.

¹²Joyce, op. cit., p. 201.

¹³Ibid., p. 247.

Stephen's moorings are cut. He can no longer serve what he does not believe whether home, country, or church. ". . . I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can . . ." ¹⁴

Themes

Studies in Joyce's works have dealt with his themes: "Alienation, isolation, the Fall, the search for the father, exile--all these and others serve as leit-motifs, to recur again and again . . ." ¹⁵ Of the themes in Portrait I have selected two for study here, alienation and destiny.

That Stephen Dedalus is alone in the world is a theme which is unmistakably clear. The sense of withdrawal from the world begins early. It is symbolized by his departure from home to attend school at Clongowes; it is reinforced by the reminder, when he returned home, that he is at home in neither place.

The noise of children at play annoyed him and their silly voices made him feel, even more keenly than he had felt at Clongowes, that he was different from others. He did not want to play. He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. ¹⁶

The sense of detachment is not only expressed with regard to his peers; it is experienced in his inability to feel love or hate. It is not that he is devoid of feeling; rather, he is unable to feel for others. He is detached from extroverted emotion.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 247.

¹⁵Ryf, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁶Joyce, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

. . . he wondered why he bore no malice now to those who had tormented him. He had not forgotten a whit of their cowardice and cruelty but the memory of it called forth no anger from him. All the descriptions of fierce love and hatred which he had met in books seemed to him therefore unreal.¹⁷

With his immediate family, Stephen is increasingly withdrawn despite the usual attitudes and experiences of his early childhood. At school he dreams of going home for Christmas holidays, feels homesick, wants to put his head on his mother's lap, writes her to come and get him. He soon establishes the distant detachment of an observer who is only close enough to what he sees to be repelled by it. On a night-long train trip with his father

He listened without sympathy to his father's evocation of Cork and of scenes of his youth, a tale broken by sighs or draughts from his pocketflask whenever the image of some dead friend appeared in it or whenever the evoker remembered suddenly the purpose of his actual visit. Stephen heard but could feel no pity.¹⁸

Stephen sees what is happening within him and, having won a substantial prize for an exhibition and essay, he spends it all on his family.

For a swift season of merrymaking the money of his prizes ran through Stephen's fingers. Great parcels of groceries and delicacies and dried fruits arrived from the city. Every day he drew up a bill of fare for the family and every night led a party . . . to the theatre . . .

.
How foolish his aim had been! He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up, by rules of conduct and active interests and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of tides within him. Useless. From without as from within the water had flowed over his barriers; their tides began once more to jostle fiercely above the crumbled mole.

He saw clearly too his own futile isolation. He had not gone one step nearer the lives he had sought to approach nor bridged the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 131.

restless shame and rancour that divided him from mother and brother and sister. He felt that he was hardly of the one blood with them but stood to them rather in the mystical kinship of fosterage, fosterchild and fosterbrother.¹⁹

Even in this recital we have no mention of the father. By the time Stephen enters the university his break with his father is complete, though he still submits to his mother's scrubbing of his face.

Stephen knew alienation. For most of his life, while burning with intense feeling within, toward others "a cold lucid indifference reigned in his soul."²⁰

The second theme in Portrait is that of destiny.

That Dedalus would be called to a literary or artistic vocation was evident early in his life. His feelings were intensely stimulated by the beauty of words. In a childhood sickness he recalls words taught him earlier.

How beautiful the words were where they said "Bury me in the old churchyard!" A tremor passed over his body. How sad and how beautiful! He wanted to cry quietly but not for himself; for the words, so beautiful and sad, like music. The bell! The bell! Farewell! O farewell!²¹

One experience is pre-eminent in Stephen's sense of his destiny. Its antecedent was the severing of two ties, with the church and with his mother. As to the church, he knew that he would "never swing the thurible before the tabernacle as a priest."²² His father was no longer a factor. But toward his mother there were vague longings for understanding. The break came over the matter of Stephen's acceptance to the

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 103.

²¹ Ibid., p. 24.

²² Ibid., p. 162.

university. His mother feared for his soul and did not want him to go.

. . . her mistrust pricked him . . . and he thought coldly how he had watched the faith which was fading down in his soul aging and strengthening in her eyes. A dim antagonism gathered force within him and darkened his mind as a cloud against her disloyalty: and when it passed, cloudlike, leaving his mind serene and dutiful towards her again, he was made aware dimly and without regret of a first noiseless sundering of their lives.²³

With that break he "had passed beyond the challenge of the sentries who stood as guardians of his boyhood and had sought to keep him that he might be subject to them . . ."²⁴ He was now a free man, but where was he going? Then, "on a day of dappled seaborne clouds,"²⁵ he suddenly learned. "Stephaneforos!" a friend cried out. That Greek form of his name, playfully given, called up in him images of the "great artificer whose name he bore."²⁶

His throat ached with a desire to cry aloud, the cry of a hawk or eagle on high, to cry piercingly of his deliverance to the winds. This was the call of life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar. . . .

.
He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable.

.
"Heavenly God!" cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy.²⁷

²³Ibid., pp. 164-65.

²⁴Ibid., p. 165.

²⁵Ibid., p. 166.

²⁶Ibid., p. 168.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 169-71.

II. THE SERMON

Setting

Stephen Dedalus was educated in the Jesuit tradition of classical learning: hard discipline, sound doctrine and devout living. These are the concerns also of a retreat held at Belvedere College where for a time Stephen was a student. The sermons were delivered during a retreat in honor of St. Francis Xavier. The first sermon was in the nature of an extended announcement concerning the retreat. Father Arnall, Stephen's former teacher at Clongowes, delivered the sermons. He stated his purpose as follows:

During these few days I intent to put before you some thoughts concerning the four last things. They are . . . death, judgment, hell, and heaven. . . . we have been sent into this world for one thing . . .: to do God's holy will and to save our immortal souls. All else is worthless.²⁸

The second sermon of the four in Portrait is summarized rather than given in full text, as is the case with the first, third, and fourth. Its topic is death and judgment. The third sermon, and the fourth, as we shall see, deals with hell. It is explicitly a sermon on the physical suffering in hell. The fourth sermon is about the spiritual suffering in hell. Father Arnall did not make good his promise to speak about heaven, unless heaven may be considered an escape from the hell he so terrifyingly described.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 109-110.

SERMON VI

1 I am cast away from the sight of Thine eyes: words taken,
 2 my dear little brothers in Christ, from the Book of Psalms, thir-
 3 tieth chapter, twenty-third verse. In the name of the Father and
 4 of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

.

5 This morning we endeavoured, in our reflection upon hell,
 6 to make what our holy founder calls in his book of spiritual
 7 exercises, the composition of place. We endeavoured, that is, to
 8 imagine with the senses of the mind, in our imagination, the
 9 material character of that awful place and of the physical tor-
 10 ments which all who are in hell endure. This evening we shall
 11 consider for a few moments the nature of the spiritual torments
 12 of hell.

13 Sin, remember, is a twofold enormity. It is a base consent
 14 to the promptings of our corrupt nature to the lower instincts,
 15 to that which is gross and beastlike; and it is also a turning away
 16 from the counsel of our higher nature, from all that is pure and
 17 holy, from the Holy God Himself. For this reason mortal sin is
 18 punished in hell by two different forms of punishment, physical
 19 and spiritual.

20 Now of all these spiritual pains by far the greatest is the
 21 pain of loss, so great, in fact, that in itself it is a torment
 22 greater than all the others. Saint Thomas, the greatest doctor
 23 of the church, the angelic doctor, as he is called, says that the
 24 worst damnation consists in this that the understanding of man is
 25 totally deprived of divine light and his affection obstinately
 26 turned away from the goodness of God. God, remember, is a being
 27 infinitely good and therefore the loss of such a being must be a
 28 loss infinitely painful. In this life we have not a very clear
 29 idea of what such a loss must be but the damned in hell, for
 30 their greater torment, have a full understanding of that which
 31 they have lost and understand that they have lost it through
 32 their sins and have lost it for ever. At the very instant of
 33 death the bonds of the flesh are broken asunder and the soul at
 34 once flies towards God. The soul tends towards God as towards
 35 the centre of her existence. Remember, my dear little boys, our

*Full text of a sermon by Father Arnall in James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: Viking Press, 1964), pp. 127-135.

36 souls long to be with God. We come from God, we live by God, we
 37 belong to God: we are His, inalienably His. God loves with a
 38 divine love every human soul and every human soul lives in that
 39 love. How could it be otherwise? Every breath that we draw,
 40 every thought of our brain, every instant of life proceed from
 41 God's inexhaustible goodness. And if it be pain for a mother to
 42 be parted from her child, for a man to be exiled from hearth and
 43 home, for friend to be sundered from friend, O think what pain,
 44 what anguish, it must be for the poor soul to be spurned from the
 45 presence of the supremely good and loving Creator Who has called
 46 that soul into existence from nothingness and sustained it in life
 47 and loved it with an immeasurable love. This, then, to be separated
 48 for ever from its greatest good, from God, and to feel the anguish
 49 of that separation, knowing full well that it is unchangeable, this
 50 is the greatest torment which the created soul is capable of bear-
 51 ing, poena damni, the pain of loss.

52 The second pain which will afflict the souls of the damned
 53 in hell is the pain of conscience. Just as in dead bodies worms
 54 are engendered by putrefaction so in the souls of the lost there
 55 arises a perpetual remorse from the putrefaction of sin, the sting
 56 of conscience, the worm, as Pope Innocent the Third calls it, of
 57 the triple sting. The first sting inflicted by this cruel worm
 58 will be the memory of past pleasures. O what a dreadful memory
 59 will that be! In the lake of all devouring flame the proud king
 60 will remember the pomps of his court, the wise but wicked man his
 61 libraries and instruments of research, the lover of artistic plea-
 62 sures his marbles and pictures and other art treasures, he who
 63 delighted in the pleasures of the table his gorgeous feasts, his
 64 dishes prepared with such delicacy, his choice wines; the miser
 65 will remember his hoard of gold, the robber his ill gotten wealth,
 66 the angry and revengeful and merciless murderers their deeds of
 67 blood and violence in which they revelled, the impure and adult-
 68 erous the unspeakable and filthy pleasures in which they delighted.
 69 They will remember all this and loathe themselves and their sins.
 70 For how miserable will all those pleasures seem to the soul con-
 71 demned to suffer in hellfire for ages and ages. How will they
 72 rage and fume to think that they have lost the bliss of heaven for
 73 the dross of earth, for a few pieces of metal, for the vain honours,
 74 for bodily comforts, for a tingling of the nerves. They will re-
 75 pent indeed: and this is the second sting of the worm of conscience
 76 a late and fruitless sorrow for sins committed. Divine justice
 77 insists that the understanding of those miserable wretches be fixed
 78 continually on the sins of which they were guilty and moreover, as
 79 Saint Augustine points out, God will impart to them His own knowl-
 80 edge of sin so that sin will appear to them in all its hideous
 81 malice as it appears to the eyes of God Himself. They will behold
 82 their sins in all their foulness and repent but it will be too late
 83 and then they will bewail the good occasions which they neglected.
 84 This is the last and deepest and most cruel sting of the worm of

85 conscience. The conscience will say: You had time and opportunity
 86 to repent and would not. You were brought up religiously by your
 87 parents. You had the sacraments and graces and indulgences of the
 88 church to aid you. You had the minister of God to preach to you,
 89 to call you back when you had strayed, to forgive you your sins,
 90 no matter how many, how abominable, if only you had confessed and
 91 repented. No. You would not. You flouted the ministers of holy
 92 religion, you turned your back on the confessional, you wallowed
 93 deeper and deeper in the mire of sin. God appealed to you,
 94 threatened you, entreated you to return to Him. O what shame,
 95 what misery! The Ruler of the universe entreated you, a creature
 96 of clay, to love Him Who made you and to keep His law. No. You
 97 would not. And now, though you were to flood all hell with your
 98 tears if you could still weep, all that sea of repentance would
 99 not gain for you what a single tear of true repentance shed during
 100 your mortal life would have gained for you. You implore now a
 101 moment of earthly life wherein to repent: in vain. That time is
 102 gone: gone for ever.

103 Such is the threefold sting of conscience, the viper which
 104 gnaws the very heart's core of the wretches in hell so that filled
 105 with hellish fury they curse themselves for their folly and curse
 106 the evil companions who have brought them to such ruin and curse
 107 the devils who tempted them in life and now mock them and torture
 108 them in eternity and even revile and curse the Supreme Being Whose
 109 goodness and patience they scorned and slighted but Whose justice
 110 power they cannot evade.

111 The next spiritual pain to which the damned are subjected
 112 is the pain of extension. Man, in this earthly life, though he
 113 be capable of many evils, is not capable of all at once inasmuch
 114 as one evil corrects and counteracts another just as one poison
 115 frequently corrects another. In hell on the contrary one torment,
 116 instead of counteracting another, lends it still greater force:
 117 and moreover as the internal faculties are more perfect than the
 118 external senses, so are they more capable of suffering. Just as
 119 every sense is afflicted with a fitting torment so every spiritual
 120 faculty; the fancy with horrible images, the sensitive faculty with
 121 alternate longing and rage, the mind and understanding with an
 122 interior darkness more terrible even than the exterior darkness
 123 which reigns in that dreadful prison. The malice, impotent though
 124 it be, which possesses these demon souls is an evil of boundless
 125 extension, of limitless duration, a frightful state of wickedness
 126 which we can scarcely realize unless we bear in mind the enormity
 127 of sin and the hatred God bears to it.

128 Opposed to this pain of extension and yet coexistence with
 129 it we have the pain of intensity. Hell is the centre of evils and,
 130 as you know, things are more intense at their centres than at their
 131 remotest points. There are no contraries or admixtures of any kind
 132 to temper or soften in the least the pains of hell. Nay, things

133 which are good in themselves become evil in hell. Company, else-
 134 where a source of comfort to the afflicted, will be there a con-
 135 tinual torment: knowledge, so much longed for as the chief good
 136 of the intellect, will there be hated worse than ignorance: light,
 137 so much coveted by all creatures from the lord of creation down to
 138 the humblest plant in the forest, will be loathed intensely. In
 139 this life our sorrows are either not very long or not very great
 140 because nature either overcomes them by habits or puts an end to
 141 them by sinking under their weight. But in hell the torments can-
 142 not be overcome by habit. For while they are of terrible intensity
 143 they are at the same time of continual variety, each pain, so to
 144 speak, taking fire from another and reendowing that which has
 145 enkindled it with a still fiercer flame. Nor can nature escape
 146 from these intense and various tortures by succumbing to them for
 147 the soul is sustained and maintained in evil so that its suffering
 148 may be the greater. Boundless extension of torment, incredible
 149 intensity of suffering, unceasing variety of torture--this is what
 150 the divine majesty, so outraged by sinners, demands, this is what
 151 the holiness of heaven, slighted and set aside for the lustful and
 152 low pleasures of the corrupt flesh, requires, this is what the
 153 blood of the innocent Lamb of God, shed for the redemption of sin-
 154 ners, trampled upon by the vilest of the vile, insists upon.

155 Last and crowning torture of all the tortures of that awful
 156 place is the eternity of hell. Eternity! O, dread and dire word.
 157 Eternity! What mind of man can understand it? And, remember, it
 158 is an eternity of pain. Even though the pains of hell were not so
 159 terrible as they are yet they would become infinite as they are
 160 destined to last for ever. But while they are everlasting they
 161 are at the same time, as you know, intolerably intense, unbearably
 162 extensive. To bear even the sting of an insect for all eternity
 163 would be a dreadful torment. What must it be, then, to bear the
 164 manifold tortures of hell for ever? For ever! For all eternity!
 165 Not for a year or for an age but for ever. Try to imagine the
 166 awful meaning of this. You have often seen the sand on the sea-
 167 shore. How fine are its tiny grains! And how many of those tiny
 168 little grains go to make up the small handful which a child grasps
 169 in its play. Now imagine a mountain of that sand, a million miles
 170 high, reaching from the earth to the farthest heavens, and a million
 171 miles broad, extending to remotest space, and a million miles in
 172 thickness: and imagine such an enormous mass of countless par-
 173 ticles of sand multiplied as often as there are leaves in the
 174 forest, drops of water in the mighty ocean, feathers on birds,
 175 scales on fish, hairs on animals, atoms in the vast expanse of the
 176 air: and imagine that at the end of every million years a little
 177 bird came to that mountain and carried away in its beak a tiny
 178 grain of that sand. How many millions upon millions of centuries
 179 would pass before that bird had carried away even a square foot
 180 of that mountain, how many eons upon eons of ages before it had
 181 carried away all. Yet at the end of that immense stretch of time
 182 not even one instant of eternity could be said to have ended.

183 At the end of all those billions and trillions of years eternity
 184 would have scarcely begun. And if that mountain rose again after
 185 it had been all carried away and if the bird came again and car-
 186 ried it all away again grain by grain: and if it so rose and
 187 sank as many times as there are stars in the sky, atoms in the
 188 air, drops of water in the sea, leaves on the trees, feathers
 189 upon birds, scales upon fish, hairs upon animals, at the end of
 190 all those innumerable risings and sinkings of that immeasurably
 191 vast mountain not one single instant of eternity could be said to
 192 have ended; even then, at the end of such a period, after that eon
 193 of time the mere thought of which makes our very brain reel
 194 dizzily, eternity would have scarcely begun.

195 A holy saint (one of our own fathers I believe it was) was
 196 once vouchsafed a vision of hell. It seemed to him that he stood
 197 in the midst of a great hall, dark and silent save for the ticking
 198 of a great clock. The ticking went on unceasingly; and it seemed
 199 to this saint that the sound of the ticking was the ceaseless repe-
 200 tition of the words: ever, never; ever, never. Ever to be in hell,
 201 never to be in heaven; ever to be shut off from the presence of
 202 God, never to enjoy the beautiful vision; ever to be eaten with
 203 flames, gnawed by vermin, goaded with burning spikes, never to be
 204 free from those pains; ever to have the conscience upbraid one,
 205 the memory enrage, the mind filled with the darkness and despair,
 206 never to escape; ever to curse and revile the foul demons who
 207 gloat fiendishly over the misery of their dupes, never to behold
 208 the shining raiment of the blessed spirits; ever to cry out of
 209 the abyss of fire to God for an instant, a single instant, of
 210 respite from such awful agony, never to receive, even for an in-
 211 stant, a single instant, of respite from such awful agony, never
 212 to receive, even for an instant, God's pardon; ever to suffer,
 213 never to enjoy; ever to be damned, never to be saved; ever, never;
 214 ever, never. O what a dreadful punishment! An eternity of end-
 215 less agony, of endless bodily and spiritual torment, without one
 216 ray of hope, without one moment of cessation, of agony limitless
 217 in extent, limitless in intensity, of torment infinitely lasting,
 218 infinitely varied, or torture that sustains eternally that which
 219 it eternally devours, of anguish that everlastingly preys upon the
 220 spirit while it racks the flesh, an eternity, every instant of
 221 which is itself an eternity, and that eternity an eternity of woe.
 222 Such is the terrible punishment decreed for those who die in mortal
 223 sin by an almighty and a just God.

224 Yes, a just God! Men, reasoning always as men, are aston-
 225 ished that God should mete out an everlasting and infinite punish-
 226 ment in the fires of hell for a single grievous sin. They reason
 227 thus because, blinded by the gross illusion of the flesh and the
 228 darkness of human understanding, they are unable to comprehend the
 229 hideous malice of mortal sin. They reason thus because they are
 230 unable to comprehend that even venial sin is of such a foul and
 231 hideous nature that even if the omnipotent Creator could end all

232 the evil and misery in the world, the wars, the diseases, the
 233 robberies, the crimes, the deaths, the murders, on condition that
 234 He allowed a single venial sin to pass unpunished, a single venial
 235 sin, a lie, an angry look, a moment of willful sloth, He, the great
 236 omnipotent God, could not do so because sin, be it in thought or
 237 deed, is a transgression of His law and God would not be God if
 238 He did not punish the transgressor.

239 A sin, an instant of rebellious pride of the intellect,
 240 made Lucifer and a third part of the cohorts of angels fall from
 241 their glory. A sin, an instant of folly and weakness, drove Adam
 242 and Eve out of Eden and brought death and suffering into the world.
 243 To retrieve the consequences of that sin the Only Begotten Son of
 244 God came down to earth, lived and suffered and died a most painful
 245 death, hanging for three hours on the cross.

246 O, my dear little brethren in Christ Jesus, will we trample
 247 again upon that torn and mangled corpse? Will we spit upon that
 248 face so full of sorrow and love? Will we too, like the cruel Jews
 249 and the brutal soldiers, mock that gentle and compassionate Saviour
 250 Who trod alone for our sake the awful winepress of sorrow? Every
 251 word of sin is a wound in His tender side. Every sinful act is
 252 a thorn piercing His head. Every impure thought, deliberately
 253 yielded to, is a keen lance transfixing that sacred and loving
 254 heart. No, no. It is impossible for any human being to do that
 255 which offends so deeply the divine majesty, that which is punished
 256 by an eternity of agony, that which crucifies again the Son of
 257 God and makes a mockery of Him.

258 I pray to God that my poor words may have availed today
 259 to confirm in holiness those who are in a state of grace, to
 260 strengthen the wavering, to lead back to the state of grace the
 261 poor soul that has strayed if any such be among you. I pray to
 262 God, and do you pray with me, that we may repent of our sins. I
 263 will ask you now, all of you, to repeat after me the act of con-
 264 trition, kneeling here in this humble chapel in the presence of
 265 God. He is there in the tabernacle burning with love for mankind,
 266 ready to comfort the afflicted. Be not afraid. No matter how
 267 many or how foul the sins if only you repent of them they will be
 268 forgiven you. Let no worldly shame hold you back. God is still
 269 the merciful Lord Who wishes not the eternal death of the sinner
 270 but rather that he be converted and live.

271 He calls you to Him. You are His. He made you out of
 272 nothing. He loved you as only a God can love. His arms are open
 273 to receive you even though you have sinned against Him. Come to
 274 Him, poor sinner, poor vain and erring sinner. Now is the accept-
 275 able time. Now is the hour.

Themes

In each of the sermons treated thus far, themes have been related to the subject matter of the sermon. We have asked what the preacher was talking about and what he was saying about it.²⁹ Such is not the case in this sermon from Portrait. The subject is hell, as I have said, but one is drawn to study the sermon by its imagery, not its themes. More to the point, the message is in its imagery. Once given the topic, a series of images emerge. I mention the topics here in order to depart from them.

In substance, Father Arnall declares that sin will be punished in hell; that hell is a place of spiritual torment;³⁰ that torments consist of loss,³¹ the "triple sting of conscience,"³² the pain of extension,³³ and so on. These are not themes, however, but sub-topics under the heading of eternal punishment. I conclude that it is unjust to abstract these as themes; the sermon seen thus is a parody.

Father Arnall uses the power of rhetorical language and religious images to evoke terror and, hence, repentance. This is not only a method; it is the message. There is no why, only that; no reasoned treatment of doctrine, only graphic declaration and illustration of it. Father Arnall announces this at the outset of his remarks:

. . . we endeavoured . . . to imagine with the senses of the mind, in our imagination, the material character of that awful place and

²⁹H. Grady Davis, Design for Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), p. 24.

³⁰Cf. ante, p. 101, line 11.

³¹Cf. ante, p. 101, line 21.

³²Cf. ante, p. 102, line 57.

³³Cf. ante, p. 103, line 112.

of the physical torments which all who are in hell endure. This evening we shall consider for a few moments the nature of the spiritual torments of hell.³⁴

It is important to take seriously the phrase "to imagine with the sense of the mind;" the graphic power of certain images conveys the substance of Father Arnall's sermon on hell. Speaking of the pains of hell, Father Arnall declares:

For while they are of terrible intensity they are at the same time of continual variety, each pain, so to speak, taking fire from another and reendowing that which has enkindled it with a still fiercer flame.³⁵

The measure of hell's eternity is taken in a long passage that describes a mountain a million miles high carried off grain by grain by a bird.

"Yet at the end of that immense stretch of time not even one instant of eternity could be said to have ended."³⁶ Hell is an ever-never land³⁷ in which "foul . . . demons gloat fiendishly over the misery of their dupes."³⁸

The sermon is not a discursive treatment of themes. Rather, it is a kaleidoscope of tortured images left slowly turning in the mind. Stephen is impelled to flee from them and respond to the beckoning of Father Arnall:

³⁴Cf. ante, p. 101, lines 5-12.

³⁵Cf. ante, p. 104, lines 142-145.

³⁶Cf. ante, p. 104, lines 180, 181.

³⁷Cf. ante, p. 105, line 200.

³⁸Cf. ante, p. 105, lines 206, 207.

He calls you to Him. You are His. He made you out of nothing. He loves you as only a God can love. His arms are open to receive you even though you have sinned against Him. Come to Him, poor sinner, poor vain and erring sinner. . . .³⁹

Relation between Sermon and Novel

There is no necessary relation between the topic of Father Arnall's sermon and the themes of the novel, which I discussed earlier as alienation and destiny. The sermon does not serve that function. The novel treats of a young man's development from childhood to early maturity. The sermon is thus important as an event; it is the immediate cause of a break with a way of life⁴⁰ which was keeping Stephen from facing his destiny. The sermon sets him on a path of strictest devotion rejecting which he finds his true vocation. The sermon thus provides a decisive moment in the life of Stephen Dedalus. By embracing the message of the sermon and then repudiating it, he finds his destiny.

III. CRITIQUE

Gospel Content of the Sermon

Redemption. The place of Christ is described after the midpoint of the sermon has been passed. Father Arnall speaks of "the blood of the innocent Lamb of God, shed for the redemption of sinners . . ."⁴¹ The setting of this definition of God's work in Christ tells us that the innocence of Christ is being contrasted with ". . . the lustful and low

³⁹ Cf. ante, p. 106, lines 271-274.

⁴⁰ Joyce, op. cit., pp. 101-104.

⁴¹ Cf. ante, p. 104, lines 152, 153.

pleasures of the corrupt flesh."⁴²

There is one other reference to redemption in the sermon. In it the purpose of Christ's coming is stated: "To retrieve the consequences of . . . sin the Only Begotten Son of God came down to earth, lived and suffered and died a most painful death, hanging for three hours on the cross."⁴³ This painful death is contrasted with ". . . an instant of rebellious pride of the intellect . . . an instant of folly and weakness . . ."⁴⁴

These two references, the only such references, make it clear that the source of redemption is God's activity in Christ.

God's love and purpose. God's purpose in history is not treated in the sermon. Man is not described as the creature made to work in the world, but as the one who is made to love God, without apparent reference to the world. "The soul tends towards God as towards the centre of her existence . . ."⁴⁵ Reality is the moral realm of sin and redemption in Father Arnall's sermon. The fall of Lucifer and the angels, the sin of Adam and Eve, which brought death and suffering into the world, the crucifixion of Christ and the repentance of the sinner--these are the

⁴²Cf. ante, p. 104, lines 151,152.

⁴³Cf. ante, p. 104, lines 151,152.

⁴⁴Cf. ante, p. 106, lines 239,241.

⁴⁵Cf. ante, p. 101, lines 34,35.

world, for Father Arnall. The sermon is given without reference to the "mental vernacular of his time"⁴⁶ or any other time in the historical sense.

Judgment and mercy. Judgmental aspects of the sermon are dominant.

The conscience will say: You had time and opportunity to repent and would not. You were brought up religiously by your parents. You had the sacraments and graces and indulgences of the church to aid you. You had the ministers of God to preach to you, to call you back when you strayed, to forgive you your sins, no matter how many, how abominable, if only you had confessed and repented. No. You would not.⁴⁷

The punishment which God metes out against the sinner is based on the requirements of justice.

Yes, a just God! Men, reasoning always as men, are astonished that God should mete out an everlasting and infinite punishment in the fires of hell for a single grievous sin. They reason thus because, blinded by the gross illusion of the flesh and the darkness of human understanding, they are unable to comprehend the hideous malice of mortal sin. They reason thus because they are unable to comprehend that even venial sin is of such a foul and hideous nature that even if the omnipotent Creator could end all the evil and misery in the world . . . on condition that He allowed a single venial sin to pass unpunished . . . He, the great omnipotent God, could not do so because sin, be it in thought or deed, is a transgression of His law and God would not be God if He did not punish the transgressor.⁴⁸

The portrayal which Father Arnall gives is that of a loving heavenly Father doing all in his power to save his children from unspeakable torture only to see them rush from him toward their fate. He

⁴⁶ P. T. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 76.

⁴⁷ Cf. ante, p. 103, lines 85-91.

⁴⁸ Cf. ante, p. 105-106, lines 224-238.

cannot stop their headlong flight because he is bound by the justice in his love to let them choose freely. Only their free choice to repent can stay their eternal damnation for justice requires eternal punishment of unconfessed sins.

Compassion. Loving concern for the sinner is expressed throughout the sermon. An example of this is found in the description of the pain of hell⁴⁹ which is followed immediately by a hymn of praise to God.

The soul tends towards God as towards the centre of her existence. . . . We come from God, we live by God, we belong to God: we are His, inalienably His. God loves with a divine love every human soul and every human soul lives in that love. . . . Every breath that we draw, every thought of our brain, every instant of life proceed from God's inexhaustible goodness.⁵⁰

The compassionate love of God is starkly contrasted with the inescapable thrust of the sermon--that God has ordained the most exquisite torture for those who reject his love through failure to repent.

The new humanity. In its closing moments, the sermon refers to those who are in a state of grace. The quality of life which is to mark such persons is that they are to be confirmed "in holiness."⁵¹ Father Arnall is not speaking to the new humanity joined with Christ but the old humanity living in unconfessed sin.

⁴⁹Cf. ante, p. 101, lines 20-32.

⁵⁰Cf. ante, pp. 101-102, lines 34-41.

⁵¹Cf. ante, p. 106, lines 258,259.

Theological Summary

As Father Arnall nears the end of his sermon he states his hopes for the consequences of his remarks:

I pray to God that my poor words may have availed today to confirm in holiness those who are in a state of grace, strengthen the wavering, to lead back to a state of grace the poor soul that has strayed if any such be among you.⁵²

This purpose controls the entire sermon. But Father Arnall is clearly convinced that there is an abundance of straying souls within his congregation, else the elaborate recital of punishments would not be required. The appeal is based upon fear and the technique for inducing it is a torturous description of hell.

The sermon does not give a definition of sin which compels intellectual or emotional assent to the kind of torture which is its consequence. Father Arnall begins with a broad definition.

Sin . . . is a twofold enormity. It is a base consent to the promptings of our corrupt nature to the lower instincts, to that which is gross and beastlike; and it is also a turning away from the counsel of our higher nature, from all that is pure and holy, from the Holy God Himself. For this reason mortal sin is punished in hell by two different forms of punishment, physical and spiritual.⁵³

The enormity of sin is not convincing for subsequent references to the acts of sin are as follows: "an instant of rebellious pride of the intellect;"⁵⁴ "an instant of folly and weakness;"⁵⁵ "a lie, an angry

⁵²Cf. ante, p. 106, lines 258-261.

⁵³Cf. ante, p. 101, lines 13-19.

⁵⁴Cf. ante, p. 106, line 239.

⁵⁵Cf. ante, p. 106, line 241.

look, a moment of wilful sloth."⁵⁶

The definition of God's goodness, like that of sin, is broad and reasonable: "God is a being infinitely good and therefore the loss of such a being must be a loss infinitely painful."⁵⁷ The sinner is not spared the details of how painful infinite pain can be.

An eternity of endless agony, of endless bodily and spiritual torment, without one ray of hope, without one moment of cessation, of agony limitless in extent, limitless in intensity, of torment infinitely lasting, infinitely varied, of torture that sustains eternally that which it eternally devours, of anguish that everlastingly preys upon the spirit while it racks the flesh, an eternity, every instant of which is itself an eternity, and that eternity an eternity of woe. Such is the terrible punishment decreed for those who die in mortal sin by an almighty and a just God.⁵⁸

Father Arnall defends this level of punishment on the basis that since sin is a transgression of his law, "God would not be God if He did not punish the transgressor."⁵⁹

The body of the sermon is an elaboration of these theological persuasions.

Homiletical Summary

The sermon by Father Arnall reminds us of the close bond which exists between the religious tradition of the preacher and the content of his sermon. The definition of sin in the sermon is an example of this because it has a pre-supposed meaning ready at hand. Apart from

⁵⁶Cf. ante, p. 106, line 235.

⁵⁷Cf. ante, p. 101, lines 26,28.

⁵⁸Cf. ante, p. 105, lines 214-223.

⁵⁹Cf. ante, p. 106, lines 237,238.

the substance brought to it by the hearer, the definition of sin is too picayune to warrant the weight of punishment which falls upon it. The God who levels all that judgment upon small matters can scarcely be worshipped. We must conclude that more is being brought to the understanding of sin than is apparent in the sermon. It is this unspoken dimension of the sermon that alone would give it some basis in rationality. Without it the sermon could be regarded as the sadistic ruminations of a brilliant old priest.

Various Christian traditions support the notion that an "instant of folly and weakness"⁶⁰ can precipitate one into a "boundless extension"⁶¹ of eternal torments. However, one senses the special contribution of parochial Irish Catholicism in the savoring of gruesome details about damnation.

. . . ever to be eaten with flames, gnawed by vermin, goaded with burning spikes, never to be free from those pains; ever to have the conscience upbraid one, the memory enrage, the mind filled with the darkness and despair, never to escape; ever to curse and revile . . .⁶²

And the senses of the mind are indeed invoked in the following: "just as in dead bodies worms are engendered by putrefaction so in the souls of the lost there arises the sting of conscience, the worm . . . of the triple sting."⁶³

Given the pre-suppositions of the sermon, the theological

⁶⁰Cf. ante, p. 106, line 241.

⁶¹Cf. ante, p. 103, lines 124, 125.

⁶²Cf. ante, p. 105, lines 202, 204.

⁶³Cf. ante, p. 102, lines 53-57.

conditioning of a closely-knit religious society, the sermon is a forceful instrument to incite action through awakening the conscience. Rhetorical devices appear throughout; it is a rhetoric which moves the hearer. Father Arnall draws great effect from the repetition of one word:

. . . the wretches in hell . . .
 curse themselves for their folly . . .
 curse the evil companions who have brought them to such ruin . . .
 curse the devils who tempted them in life . . .
 curse the Supreme Being Whose goodness and patience they scorned and slighted.⁶⁴

Descriptive language is used in such a way that one not only sees the action, but feels it as well: "every impure thought, deliberately yielded to, is a keen lance transfixing that sacred and loving heart."⁶⁵

Despite the remoteness from contemporary realities which one feels in the sermon, it clearly speaks within the framework of the common expectation and understanding of the hearers. It ran like fire through the gloomy corridors of at least one bad Catholic conscience, that of Stephen Dedalus.

⁶⁴Cf. ante, p. 103, lines 103-110. Arrangement of lines is mine.

⁶⁵Cf. ante, p. 106, lines 252,254.

CHAPTER VIII

MOBY DICK¹

The entry upon a study of Moby Dick is not unlike the loosing of Pequod's moorage from Nantucket for three years at sea and the gathering of data like Captain Bildad's attention to the acquisition and storage of supplies. A wealth of literature bears on the many-levelled genius of Herman Melville and Moby Dick is the focus of that genius.

Appreciative responses to the work were rare at first and the book was known principally to writers and critics for some 60 years after it was written. "It is only since 1914 in America that this neglect has been even partly atoned for."² However, in 1851 one reviewer, W. Clark Russell, expressed an appreciation which more recent study has corroborated:

Melville takes this vessel, fills her full of strange men, and starts her on her insane quest, that he may have the ocean under and around him to muse upon, as though he were in a spacious burial ground, with the alternations of sunlight and moonlight and deep starless darkness to set his thoughts to. Moby-Dick is not a sea-story . . . it is a medley of nobly impassioned thoughts borne of the deep, pervaded by a grotesque human interest, owing to the contrast it suggests between the rough realities of the fore-castle, and the phantoms of men conversing in rich poetry, and strangely moving and acting in that dim weather-worn Nantucket whaler.³

¹Herman Melville, Moby Dick (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

²Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1929), p. 199.

³Hugh W. Hetherington, Melville's Reviewers (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1961), p. 281. The spelling of "Moby Dick" is given in two forms. In the Harper and Brothers edition of 1851 the form

Coming as light in a dark time, these words formed a life-long bond between Melville and Russell. Moby Dick no longer is a creature of darkness, if the witness of many critical studies may be said to bring light to that once neglected work.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL

Summary

"It is absurd and ineffectual," writes Lewis Mumford, "to give a summary of Moby Dick, or to quote, dismembered, some of the great passages."⁴ Critic Mumford makes this observation after some twenty pages of summary and before another twenty. And he is correct; the attempt is audacious and the task may remain forever incomplete.

Like the paintings in the Ajunta caves, the beauty of Moby Dick can be known only to those who will make a pilgrimage to it, and stay within its dark confines until what is darkness has become light, and one can make out, with the help of an occasional torch, its grand design, its complicated arabesque, the minute significance of its parts. No feeble pencil sketch can convey a notion of Moby Dick's extravagant beauty; but at the same time, without a hint of its design and its manner of execution, all subsequent commentary must seem flatulent and disproportionate.⁵

In briefest compass, the story is about a crazed and crippled sea captain who vows death to a monstrous white whale, Moby Dick. The whale is found and caught but escapes and turns upon its captors. It rams the Pequod and sends it to the bottom. Ishmael, teller of the tale, survives by floating on the casket of a dead friend and, like the bearers

was Moby-Dick. The Harper and Row edition of 1966 uses the form Moby Dick. Within the novel, Melville speaks of the whale as "Moby-Dick." I have followed the 1966 form in all cases except direct quotations.

⁴Mumford, op. cit., p. 176.

⁵Ibid., p. 176.

of evil tiding to ancient Job, can say, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee."⁶ What he tells is far more than a yarn of the sea. In his hands or rather in those of his creator, Melville, is the many-stranded skein of life.

What does the novel say? Critics differ. One says that the story can be read on three levels: a sea story, an orthodox statement of faith, or an attack upon and a refutation of Christian faith.⁷ It can also be understood as "the story of man's rebirth from the ways of death to the ways of life, and if read as such, . . . is a very great Christian novel."⁸ Or this:

Moby-Dick, then, is one of the first great mythologies to be created in the modern world, created, that is, out of the stuff of that world, its science, its exploration, its terrestrial daring, its concentration upon power and dominion over nature, and not out of ancient symbols, Prometheus, Endymion, Orestes, or mediaeval folk-legends, like Dr. Faustus. Moby-Dick lives imaginatively in the newly broken soil of our own life: its symbols, unlike Blake's original but mysterious figures, are directed and explicit: if the story is bedded in facts, the facts themselves are not lost in the further interpretation. Moby-Dick thus brings together the two dis-severed halves of the modern world and the modern self--its positive, practical, scientific, externalized self, bent on conquest and knowledge, and its imaginative, ideal half, bent on the transportation of conflict into art, and power into humanity. This resolution is achieved in Moby-Dick itself. . . . The best handbook on whaling is also . . . the best tragic epic of modern times and one of the fine poetic works of all time.⁹

However, definitive critical appreciations, such as that of Lewis

⁶ Job 1:15.

⁷ Lawrence Thompson, Melville's Quarrel with God (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 163.

⁸ D. B. Lockerbie, "Greatest Sermon in Fiction," Christianity Today, VIII (November 8, 1963), 9-12.

⁹ Mumford, op. cit., p. 193.

Mumford, are not necessarily definitive interpretations. The quest for Melville's meaning goes on. "It seems likely from the very nature of the book that critics will continue being, to a certain extent, each his own allegorist."¹⁰

Themes

In the novel, Captain Ahab is the personification of man's struggle against the implacable universe. The white whale is a monster symbolic of the monstrous universe. How Ahab works out that struggle provides the theme we must trace.

Ahab comes late upon the scene, but his presence has been a controlling influence long before he stood upon his quarter deck looking "like a man cut away from the stake, when the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them or taking away one particle from the compacted aged robustness."¹¹ Ahab of old had been that king who "did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."¹² That Ahab, too, had his Elijah. Captain Ahab's Elijah, "a cracked old greybeard on the wharf who mutters dreadful hints about Ahab and his voyage."¹³ Captain Peleg, part owner and agent, when asked by Ishmael about Captain Ahab, replies:

¹⁰William Braswell, Melville's Religious Thought (New York: Duke University Press, 1959), p. 57.

¹¹Melville, op. cit., p. 108.

¹²I Kings 16:33.

¹³Mumford, op. cit., p. 161.

He's a queer man, Captain Ahab--so some thing--but a good one. Oh, thou'lt like him well enough; no fear, no fear. He's a grand, ungodly, godlike man, Captain Ahab; doesn't speak much; but, when he does speak, then you may well listen. Mark ye, be forewarned; Ahab's above the common; Ahab's been in colleges, as well as 'mong the cannibals; been used to deeper wonders than the waves; fixed his fiery lance in mightier, stranger foes than whales . . .¹⁴

Captain Ahab, shorn of a leg by the whale and emasculated as the result of a slip of his ivory peg, lies abed recovering. His shameful loss of leg and manhood gives him double cause to brood; his fury toward the whale swells up like a dark, festering sore. Melville leaves us in no doubt as to Ahab's feelings about Moby Dick:

Ahab had cherished a wild vindictiveness against the whale, all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidness he at last came to identify with him not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations. The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung. That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning . . . deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred White Whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby-Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it.¹⁵

To engage the whale Ahab crowds on all sail that he may the more quickly make good his vengeance. All conspires against him; even the heavens grew a gale to restrain him. Undaunted he goes laughing to meet the storm chiding it for being a colic:

¹⁴Melville, op. cit., p. 71.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 160-61.

What a hoorosh aloft there! I wouldn't e'en take it for sublime did I not know that the colic is a noisy malady. Oh, take medicine, take medicine.¹⁶

Ahab gives no quarter in what he calls the truth. And truth to him is death to the whale. In the terms of the sermon he will "strike and kill, burn and destroy all sin though he pluck it out from under the robes of Senators and Judges."¹⁷ To Ahab the judges and senators are rulers of the universe and he has a quarrel with them, with God! Ahab has uncovered evil in God and he will strike through the mask to see if there be anything behind it. Ahab tries to harpoon Moby Dick since he cannot harpoon God.¹⁸

Ahab calls believers to look more closely at the problem of human suffering: "Lo! Ye believers in gods and goodness, . . . see the omniscient gods oblivious of suffering man . . ."¹⁹ Melville uses the character Pip as a symbol of human suffering. Pip's idiocy alone touches Ahab's heart. That tenderness is turned to attack against a heartless universe:

There can be no hearts above the snow-line. Oh, ye frozen heavens! Look down here. Ye did beget this luckless child, and have abandoned him, ye creative libertines. Here, boy; Ahab's cabin shall be Pip's home henceforth . . .²⁰

There is no right beyond the rebel man and no sure test of truth or direction or location: the quadrant is broken, the compass rendered useless by storm. Ahab disparages the quadrant for its being a feeble

¹⁶Ibid., p. 449.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 259-62.

¹⁸Braswell, op. cit., p. 59.

¹⁹Melville, op. cit., p. 457.

²⁰Ibid., p. 183.

thing that points toward a meaningless heaven and fashions a compass from a sail-needle. Thus equipped to take over the responsibility abdicated by the forces above the snow-line, Ahab is ready to encounter Moby Dick. Before the death struggle is joined, Ahab worships.

It was a strange worship with the masts lightning-touched and glowing with heavenly fire like giant tapers on an altar. Through this act of worship, Ahab was brought to the clear sense of his proper role, defiance:

Oh! thou clear spirit of clear fire, whom on these seas I as Persian once did worship, till in the sacramental act so burned by thee, that to this hour I bear the scar; I now know thee, thou clear spirit, and I now know that thy right worship is defiance. To neither love nor reverence wilt thou be kind; and e'en for hate thou canst but kill and all are killed. No fearless fool now fronts thee. I own thy speechless, placeless power; but to the last gasp of my earthquakelife will dispute its unconditional, unintegral mastery in me. In the midst of the personified impersonal, personality stands here. Thou but a point at best; whencesoe'er I came; wheresoe'er I go; yet while I earthly live, the queenly personality lives in me, and feels her royal rights. But war is pain, and hate is woe. Come in thy lowest form of love, and I will kneel and kiss thee; but at thy highest, come as mere supernal power; and though thou launchest navies of full-freighted worlds, there's that in here that still remains indifferent. Oh, thou clear spirit, of thy fire thou madest me, and like a true child of fire, I breathe it back to thee.²¹

The final, desperate struggle with the whale, the loss of ship and men and the mysterious survival of Ishmael are but the playing out of parts now foreordained.

Ahab struggled against the universe and lost.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 444-45.

II. THE SERMON

Setting

In the novel Father Mapple's sermon comes as one of the preparatory events in the life of Ishmael and of the journey of the Pequod. Before the sermon appears in the novel, we have already been introduced to Ishmael, the sailor who miraculously escapes after the sinking of the Pequod and returns to tell us the story of Moby Dick. We have also met the anomalous characters and settings of New Bedford, including Queequeg, the half-civilized cannibal and harpooner.

Ishmael's first Sunday in New Bedford finds him in the famous Whaleman's Chapel. ". . . few are the moody fishermen, shortly bound for the Indian Ocean or Pacific, who fail to make a Sunday visit to the spot."²² Ishmael takes his place in the chapel, observes his fellow worshippers, takes special note of the marine architecture of the place, and prepares to hear the celebrated Father Mapple. When he at last arrives, Father Mapple ascends his unique pulpit by a ship's ladder, pulls the ladder up after him²³ and faces his congregation.

Father Mapple rose, and in a mild voice of unassuming authority ordered the scattered people to condense. "Starboard gangway, there! side away to larboard--larboard gangway, to starboard! Midships! midships!

.
He paused a little, then kneeling in the pulpit's bows, folded his large brown hands across his chest, uplifted his closed eyes, and offered a prayer so deeply devout that he seemed kneeling and praying at the bottom of the sea.²⁴

Following a hymn, the sermon began.

²² Ibid., p. 30.

²³ Ibid., pp. 33,34.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

SERMON VII*

1 "Beloved shipmates, clinch the last verse of the first chap-
 2 ter of Jonah -- 'And God had prepared a great fish to swallow up
 3 Jonah.'"

4 "Shipmates, this book, containing only four chapters --
 5 four yarns -- is one of the smallest strands in the mighty cable
 6 of the Scriptures. Yet what depths of the soul does Jonah's deep
 7 sea-line sound! What a pregnant lesson to us is this prophet!
 8 What a noble thing is that canticle in the fish's belly! How
 9 billow-like and boisterously grand! We feel the floods surging
 10 over us; we sound with him to the kelpy bottom of the waters;
 11 seaweed and all the slime of the sea is about us!"

12 "But what is the lesson that the book of Jonah teaches?
 13 Shipmates, it is a two-stranded lesson; a lesson to us all as sin-
 14 ful men, and a lesson to me as a pilot of the living God. As sin-
 15 ful men, it is a lesson to us all, because it is a story of the
 16 sin, hard-heartedness, suddenly awakened fears, the swift punish-
 17 ment, repentance, prayers and finally the deliverance and joy of
 18 Jonah. As with all sinners among men, the sin of this son of
 19 Amittai was in his willful disobedience of the command of God --
 20 never mind now what that command was, or how conveyed -- which
 21 he found a hard command. But all the things that God would have
 22 us do are hard for us to do -- remember that -- and hence, he
 23 oftener commands us than endeavors to persuade. And if we obey
 24 God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying our-
 25 selves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists.

26 With this sin of disobedience in him, Jonah still further
 27 flouts at God, by seeking to flee from Him. He thinks that a ship
 28 made by men, will carry him into countries where God does not
 29 reign, but only the Captains of this earth. He skulks about the
 30 wharves of Joppa, and seeks a ship that's bound for Tarshish.
 31 There lurks, perhaps, a hitherto unheeded meaning here. By all
 32 accounts Tarshish could have been no other city than the modern
 33 Cadiz. That's the opinion of learned men, and where is Cadiz,
 34 shipmates? Cadiz is in Spain; as far by water, from Joppa, as
 35 Jonah could possibly have sailed in those ancient days, when the
 36 Atlantic was an almost unknown sea. Because Joppa, the modern
 37 Jaffa, shipmates, is on the most easterly coast of the Mediter-
 38 ranean, the Syrian; and Tarshish or Cadiz more than two thousand

*Full text of the sermon by Father Mapple in Herman Melville,
Moby Dick (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 36 ff.

39 miles to the westward from that, just outside the Straits of Gibraltar. See ye not then, shipmates, that Jonah sought to flee world-
 40 wide from God? Miserable man! Oh! most contemptible and worthy of
 41 all scorn; with slouched hat and guilty eye, skulking from his God;
 42 prowling among the shipping like a vile burglar hastening to cross
 43 the seas. So disordered, self-condemning is his look, that had
 44 there been policemen in those day, Jonah, on the mere suspicion
 45 of something wrong, had been arrested ere he touched a deck. How
 46 plainly he's a fugitive! no baggage, not a hat-box, valise or
 47 carpet-bag,--no friends accompany him to the wharf with their
 48 adieus. At last, after much dodging search, he binds the Tarshish
 49 ship receiving the last items of her cargo; he steps on board to
 50 see its Captain in the cabin, all sailors for the moment desist
 51 from hoisting in the goods, to mark the strangers evil eye. Jonah
 52 sees this; but in vain he tries to look all ease and confidence;
 53 in vain essays his wretched smile. Strong intuitions of the man
 54 assure the mariners he can be no innocent. In their gamesome but
 55 still serious way, one whispers to the other -- "Jack, he's robbed
 56 a widow"; or, "Joe, do you mark him; he's a bigamist"; or, "Harry
 57 lad, I guess he's the adulterer that broke jail in old Gomorrah,
 58 or belike, one of the missing murderers from Sodom." Another runs
 59 to read the bill that's stuck against the spile upon the wharf to
 60 which the ship is moored, offering five hundred gold coins for the
 61 apprehension of a parricide, and containing a description of his
 62 person. He read, and looks from Jonah to the bill; while all his
 63 sympathetic shipmates now crowd round Jonah, prepared to lay their
 64 hands upon him. Frighted Jonah trembles, and summoning all his
 65 boldness to his face, only looks so much the more a coward. He
 66 will not confess himself suspected; but that itself is strong
 67 suspicion. So he makes the best of it; and when the sailors find
 68 him not to be the man that is advertised, they let him pass, and
 69 he descends into the cabin.

71 "Who's there?" cries the Captain at his busy desk, hur-
 72 riedly making out his papers for the Customs -- 'Who's there?' Oh!
 73 how that harmless question mangles Jonah! For the instant he almost
 74 turns to flee again. But he rallies. 'I seek a passage in this
 75 ship to Tarshish; how soon sail ye, sir?' Thus far the busy Cap-
 76 tain had not looked up to Jonah, though the man now stands before
 77 him; but no sooner does he hear that hollow voice, than he darts
 78 a scrutinizing glance. 'We sail with the next coming tide,' at
 79 last he slowly answered, still intently eyeing him. 'No sooner,
 80 sir?' -- 'Soon enough for any honest man that goes a passenger.'
 81 Ha! Jonah, that's another stab. But he swiftly calls away the
 82 Captain from that scent. 'I'll sail with ye,' -- he says, -- the
 83 passage money, how much is that? -- 'I'll pay now.' For it is
 84 particularly written, shipmates, as if it were a thing not to be
 85 overlooked in this history, 'that he paid the fare thereof' ere
 86 the craft did sail. And taken with the context, this is full of
 87 meaning.

88 "Now Jonah's Captain, shipmates, was one whose discernment
 89 detects crime in any, but whose cupidity exposes it only in the
 90 penniless. In this world, shipmates, sin that pays its way can
 91 travel freely, and without a passport; whereas Virtue, if a
 92 pauper, is stopped at all frontiers. So Jonah's Captain prepares
 93 to test the length of Jonah's purse, ere he judge him openly. He
 94 charges him thrice the usual sum; and it's assented to. Then the
 95 Captain knows that Jonah is a fugitive; but at the same time
 96 resolves to help a flight that paves its rear with gold. Yet
 97 when Jonah fairly takes out his purse, prudent suspicions still
 98 molest the Captain. He rings every coin to find a counterfeit.
 99 Not a forger, any way, he mutters; and Jonah is put down for his
 100 passage. 'Point out my state-room, sir,' says Jonah now, 'I'm
 101 travelweary; I need sleep.' 'Thou look'st like it,' says the
 102 Captain, 'there's thy room.' Jonah enters, and would lock the
 103 door, but the lock contains no key. Hearing him foolishly
 104 fumbling there, the Captain laughs lowly to himself, and mutters
 105 something about the doors of convicts' cells being never allowed
 106 to be locked within. All dressed and dusty as he is, Jonah
 107 throws himself into his berth, and finds the little state-room
 108 ceiling almost resting on his forehead. The air is close, and
 109 Jonah gasps. Then, in that contracted hole, sunk, too, beneath
 110 the ship's water-line, Jonah feels the heralding presentiment of
 111 that stifling hour, when the whale shall hold him in the smallest
 112 of his bowel's wards.

113 "Screwed at its axis against the side, a swinging lamp
 114 slightly oscillates in Jonah's room; and the ship, heeling over
 115 towards the wharf with the weight of the last bales received, the
 116 lamp, flame and all, though in slight motion, still maintains a
 117 permanent obliquity with reference to the room; though, in truth,
 118 infallibly straight itself, it but made obvious the false, lying
 119 levels among which it hung. The lamp alarms and frightens Jonah;
 120 as lying in his berth his tormented eyes roll round the place, and
 121 this thus far successful fugitive finds no refuge for his restless
 122 glance. But that contradiction in the lamp more and more appals
 123 him. The floor, the ceiling, and the side, are all awry. 'Oh!
 124 so my conscience hangs in me!' he groans, 'straight upward, so it
 125 burns; but the chambers of my soul are all in crookedness!'

126 "Like one who after a night of drunken revelry hies to his
 127 bed, still reeling, but with conscience yet pricking him, as the
 128 plungings of the Roman race-horse but so much the more strike his
 129 steel tags into him; as one who in that miserable plight still
 130 turns and turns in giddy anguish, praying God for annihilation
 131 until the fit be passed; and at last amid the whirl of woe he feels,
 132 a deep stupor steals over him, as over the man who bleeds to death,
 133 for conscience is the wound, and there's naught to staunch it; so,
 134 after sore wrestlings in his berth, Jonah's prodigy of ponderous
 135 misery drags him drowning into sleep.

136 "And now the time of tide has come; the ship casts off her
 137 cables; and from the deserted wharf the uncheered ship for Tar-
 138 shish, all careening, glides to sea. That ship, my friends, was
 139 the first of recorded smugglers! the contraband was Jonah. But
 140 the sea rebels; he will not bear the wicked burden. A dreadful
 141 storm comes on, the ship is like to break. But now when the boat-
 142 swain calls all hands to lighten her; when boxes, bales, jars are
 143 clattering overboard; when the wind is shrieking, and the men are
 144 yelling, and every plank thunders with trampling feet right over
 145 Jonah's head; in all this raging tumult, Jonah sleeps his hideous
 146 sleep. He sees no black sky and raging sea, feels not the reeling
 147 timbers, and little hears he or heeds he the far rush of the mighty
 148 whale, which even now with open mouth is cleaving the seas after
 149 him. Aye, shipmates, Jonah was gone down into the sides of the
 150 ship -- a berth in the cabin as I have taken it, and was fast
 151 asleep. But the frightened master comes to him, and shrieks in
 152 his dead ear, 'What meanest thou, O sleeper! arise!' Startled
 153 from his lethargy by that direful cry, Jonah stergers to his feet,
 154 and stumbling to the deck, grasps a shroud, to look out upon the
 155 sea. But at that moment he is sprung upon by a panther billow
 156 leaping over the bulwarks. Wave after wave thus leaps into the
 157 ship, and finding no speedy vent runs roaring fore and aft, till
 158 the mariners come nigh to drowning while yet afloat. And ever,
 159 as the white moon shows her afrighted face from the steep gullies
 160 in the blackness overhead, aghast Jonah sees the rearing bowsprit
 161 pointing high upward, but soon beat downward again towards the
 162 tormented deep.

163 "Terrors upon terrors run shouting through his soul. In
 164 all his cringing attitudes, the God-fugitive is now too plainly
 165 known. The sailors mark him; more and more certain grow their
 166 suspicions of him, and at last, fully to test the truth, by
 167 referring the whole matter to high Heaven, they fall to casting
 168 lots, to see for whose cause this great tempest was upon them.
 169 The lot is Jonah's; that discovered, then how furiously they
 170 mob him with their questions. 'What is thine occupation? Whence
 171 comest thou? Thy country? What people?' But mark now, my ship-
 172 mates, the behavior of poor Jonah. The eager mariners but ask
 173 him who he is, and where from; whereas, they not only receive an
 174 answer to those questions, but likewise another answer to a ques-
 175 tion not put by them, but the unsolicited answer is forced from
 176 Jonah by the hard hand of God that is upon him.

177 "'I am a Hebrew, he cries -- and then -- 'I fear the Lord
 178 the God of Heaven who hath made the sea and the dry land.' Fear
 179 him, O Jonah? Aye, well mightest thou fear the Lord God then!'
 180 Straightaway, he now goes onto make a full confession; where-
 181 upon the mariners became more and more appalled, but still are
 182 pitiful. For when Jonah, not yet supplicating God for mercy,
 183 since he but too well knew the darkness of his deserts, -- when
 184 wretched Jonah cries out to them to take him and cast him forth

185 into the sea, for he knew that for his sake this great tempest was
 186 upon them; they mercifully turn from him, and seek by other means
 187 to save the ship. But all in vain; the indignant gale howls loud-
 188 er; then, with one hand raised invokingly to God, with the other
 189 they not unreluctantly lay hold of Jonah.

190 "And now behold Jonah taken up as an anchor and dropped into
 191 the sea; when instantly an oily calmness floats out from the east,
 192 and the sea is still, as Jonah carries down the gale with him,
 193 leaving smooth water behind. He goes down in the whirling heart
 194 of such a masterless commotion that he scarce heeds the moment
 195 when he drops seething into the yawning jaws awaiting him; and
 196 the whale shoots--to all his ivory teeth, like so many white bolts,
 197 upon his prison. Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord out of the fish's
 198 belly. But observe his prayer, and learn a weighty lesson. For
 199 sinful as he is, Jonah does not weep and wail for direct deliver-
 200 ance. He feels that his dreadful punishment is just. He leaves
 201 all his deliverance to God, contenting himself with this, that
 202 in spite of all his pains and pangs, he will still look towards His
 203 holy temple. And here, shipmates, is true and faithful repentance;
 204 not clamorous for pardon, but grateful for punishment. And how
 205 pleasing to God was this conduct in Jonah, is shown in the even-
 206 tual deliverance of him from the sea and the whale. Shipmates, I
 207 do not place Jonah before you to be copied for his sin but I do
 208 place him before you as a model of repentance. Sin not; but if
 209 you do, take heed to repent of it like Jonah.

.

210 "Shipmates, God has laid but one hand upon you; both his
 211 hands press upon me. I have read ye by what murky light may be
 212 mine the lesson that Jonah teaches to all sinners; and therefore
 213 to ye, and still more to me, for I am a greater sinner than ye.
 214 And now how gladly would I come down from this mast-head and sit
 215 on the hatches there where you sit, and listen as you listen,
 216 while some one of you reads me that other and more awful lesson
 217 which Jonah teaches to me, as a pilot of the living God. How
 218 being an anointed pilot-prophet, or speaker of true things, and
 219 bidden by the Lord to sound those unwelcome truths in the ears of
 220 a wicked Nineveh, Jonah, appalled at the hostility he should raise,
 221 fled from his mission, and sought to escape his duty and his God
 222 by taking ship at Joppa. But God is everywhere; Tarshish he never
 223 reached. As we have seen, God came upon him in the whale, and
 224 swallowed him down to living gulfs of doom, and with swift slant-
 225 ings tore him along 'into the midst of the seas,' where the eddying
 226 depth sucked him ten thousand fathoms down, and the weeds were
 227 wrapped about his head,' and all the watery world of woe howled
 228 over him. Yet even then beyond the reach of any plummet -- 'out
 229 of the belly of hell' -- when the whale grounded upon the ocean's
 230 utmost bones, even then, God heard the engulphed, repenting prophet
 231 when he cried. Then God spake unto the fish; and from the

232 shuddering cold and blackness of the sea, the whale came breaching
 233 up towards the warm and pleasant sun, and all the delights of air
 234 and earth; and 'vomited out Jonah upon the dry land;' when the word
 235 of the Lord came a second time; and Jonah, bruised and beaten --
 236 his ears, like two seashells, still multitudinously murmuring of
 237 the ocean -- Jonah did the Almighty's bidding. And what was that,
 238 shipmates? To preach the Truth in the face of Falsehood! That
 239 was it!

240 "This, shipmates, this is that other lesson; and woe to that
 241 pilot of the living God who slights it. Woe to him whom this world
 242 charms from Gospel duty! Woe to him who seeks to pour oil upon
 243 the waters when God has brewed them into a gale! Woe to him who
 244 seeks to please rather than to appall! Woe to him whose good name
 245 is more to him than goodness! Woe to him who, in this world,
 246 courts not dishonor! Woe to him who would not be true, even though
 247 to be false were salvation! Yea, woe to him who, as the great
 248 Pilot Paul has it, while preaching to others is himself a castaway.

.

249 "But oh! shipmates! on the starboard hand of every
 250 woe, there is a sure delight; and higher the top of that
 251 delight than the bottom of the woe is deep. Is not the main-
 252 truck higher than the keelson is low? Delight is to him -- a far,
 253 far upward, and inward delight -- who against the proud gods and
 254 commodores of this earth, ever stands forth his own inexorable
 255 self. Delight is to him whose strong arms yet support him, when
 256 the ship of this base treacherous world has gone down beneath
 257 him. Delight is to him, who gives no quarter in the truth, and
 258 kills, burns, and destroys all sin though he pluck it out from
 259 under the robes of Senators and Judges. Delight, -- top-gallant
 260 delight is to him, who acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord
 261 his God, and is only a patriot to heaven. Delight is to him,
 262 whom all the waves of the billows of the seas of the boisterous
 263 mob can never shake from this sure Keel of the Ages. And eternal
 264 delight and deliciousness will be his, who coming to lay him down,
 265 can say with his final breath -- O Father! chiefly known to me by
 266 Thy rod -- mortal or immortal, here I die. I have striven to be
 267 Thine, more than to be this world's, or mine own. Yet this is
 268 nothing; I leave eternity to Thee; for what is man that he should
 269 live out the lifetime of his God?"

Themes²⁵

Father Mapple's sermon is about obedience. He says that the story of Jonah is

a lesson to us all, because it is a story of the sin, hardheartedness, suddenly awakened fears, the swift punishment, repentance, prayers and finally deliverance and joy of Jonah. As with all sinners among men, the sin . . . was in his wilfull disobedience of the command of God.²⁶

These words, appearing at the beginning of the sermon, are reinforced near its end when Father Mapple further applies the truth of his sermon, namely, that disobedience requires repentance:

Shipmates, I do not place Jonah before you to be copied for his sin, but I do place him before you as a model of repentance. Sin not: but if you do, take heed to repent of it like Jonah.²⁷

The sermon is given in the vernacular of the seaman and the major part of it is a re-telling of Jonah's story. Father Mapple builds from calm to storm and ends in high emotion, proclaiming the joys which come to the man who obeys God.

Relation between Sermon and Novel

Moby Dick has two introductory sections which tell us the author's themes. The sermon provides the first, and the second is the chapter involving a character named "Bulkington."²⁸ Together these two are

²⁵Because themes in the sermon are intimately related to themes in the novel, a more extensive discussion will follow in the next section of the study.

²⁶See App., lines 14-19, p. 19.

²⁷See App. lines 206-209, p. 23.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 94-95. I will subsequently refer to this as "the Bulkington interlude," or "the Bulkington preface."

like a preface and a forward. I submit that their themes are parallel and should be studied together if the novel is to be understood.

Father Mapple's sermon is about obedience to God rather than to one's self. It is launched with the story of Jonah. He invites his congregation to consider the lesson Jonah teaches. It is a two-stranded lesson--one for the sinner and one for the pilot, but the strands are mixed. In the first strand, the pilot and the sinful man are intertwined; in the second strand, the message is only for the "pilot of the living God."²⁹ Father Mapple begins with the first strand. And the first strand is lashed down to this truth: "As with all sinners, the sin of this son of Amittai was in his willful disobedience of the command of God . . . And if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists."³⁰

This first theme of disobedience to God rather than disobedience to one's self is also conveyed in the curious Bulkington interlude which is Chapter 23. This chapter forms a preface to the story of the Pequod at sea. Melville uses Bulkington as a means of reiterating the theme of the sermon which says that we must disobey ourselves to obey God:

Glimpses do ye see of that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep open the independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of

²⁹Cf. ante, p. 125, line 14.

³⁰Cf. ante, p. 125, lines 24,25.

heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore?³¹

In the words "mortally intolerable truth" we have the demand of the sermon to disobey ourselves. The mortally tolerable truth would be to obey ourselves. One must cast off comfort of the land and slavishness of the shore. The struggle is perilous because the wildest winds of heaven and earth are as much in league with the mortally tolerable as heaven itself is joined with the soul.

If Father Mapple's sermon and the Bulkington preface are stating the same themes, there must be a second point of identity, for the sermon is composed, we recall, of two strands. The first strand is for the sinner. The second strand of the sermon is: the demand on the preacher, the pilot of the living God, to "preach the Truth to the face of Falsehood."³² The sermon follows the pattern of the two strands and deals with this second theme from line 210 through 269, the end of the sermon. That section begins:

Shipmates, God has laid but one hand upon you; both hands press upon me. I have read ye by what murky light may be mine the lesson that Jonah teaches to all sinners; and therefore, to ye, and still more to me, for I am a greater sinner than ye. And now how gladly would I come down from this masthead and sit on the hatches there where you sit, and listen as you listen, while some one of you reads me that other and more awful lesson which Jonah teaches to me, as a pilot of the living God. . . . And what was that, shipmates? To preach the Truth to the face of Falsehood! That was it! . . . Delight is to him, who gives no quarter in the truth, and kills, burns, and destroys all sin though he pluck it out from under the robes of Senators and Judges. Delight,--top-gallant delight is to him, who acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord his God, and is only a patriot to heaven.³³

³¹Melville, op. cit., p. 94. ³²Cf. ante, p. 130, line 238.

³³Cf. ante, pp. 129-130, lines 210-217; 237-239; 259-261.

The theme is clear: Preach the truth in the face of falsehood; give no quarter in the truth.

Bulkington's preface also has two and they express the same themes in different words. The first is that of "casting off" despite the "wildest winds of heaven and earth," a direct reference to the "soul's earnest thinking."³⁴ Here is the second:

But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God--so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety!³⁵

Perish we will, in any event, but to perish gloriously and for the truth as one sees it is the lesson Jonah should have taught us. "I do not place Jonah before you to be copied . . ."³⁶ In the Bulkington preface the key phrase in the second theme is "so better to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee . . ."³⁷ The death-theme of the sermon offers a striking parallel: "And eternal delight and deliciousness will be his, who coming to lay him down, can say with his final breath--O Father . . . here I die . . ."³⁸ The last line of the sermon clinches the mood of the second theme: "For what is man that he should live out the lifetime of his God?"³⁹

To recapitulate, I am saying here that the two-stranded sermon of Father Mapple is reinforced by the two themes in the Bulkington preface.

³⁴ Melville, op. cit., p. 94.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Cf. ante, p. 129, lines 206,207.

³⁷ Melville, op. cit., p. 94.

³⁸ Cf. ante, p. 130, lines 263,266.

³⁹ Cf. ante, p. 130, lines 268,269.

An understanding of the sermon and the preface requires an examination of the relationship between these two strands. In that relationship we will see that the two-stranded lesson of Jonah is but one cable. That is to say, both the strand of obedience to God and that of obedience to one's self are to be affirmed; the braiding, so to speak, occurs when the process of being one's self is resolved by doing the will of God. For the sake of clarity I have placed the opposing themes in parallel columns and the resolution of the themes in a center column.

FATHER MAPPLE

I

Claims of God

obey God

perform gospel duty

be willing to appall

II

Claims of the Self

obey the self

yield to the world's charms

seek to please

The Inexorable Self⁴⁰

Delight to him who gives no quarter in
the truth . . .
who acknowledges no law or lord
but the lord his God

The same structural and thematic analysis may be given of the Bulkington preface:

⁴⁰I understand the phrase "the inexorable self" to mean the self whose conflict between God and the self has been resolved on God's side. Cf. Melville, op. cit., p. 43.

BULKINGTON

I

Claims of the Sea

Land is ship's direct jeopardy

Deep thinking is soul's effort
to keep independence of her
sea

II

Claims of the Land

Port gives succor, safety

Wildest winds of heaven and
earth conspire to keep
soul close to shore

Demigod

Up from the spray of
thy ocean-perishing--
straight up, leaps thy
apotheosis!

Do the sermon and the Bulkington preface find a parallel in Melville's Ahab? This must be the case if it is to be established that the sermon and Bulkington's preface are the key to understanding the book. We may need a brief reference to the two-stranded theme of the sermon/preface before we make that judgment. The first strand in the sermon/preface is that of obedience to God, the second is obedience to oneself. The resolution of these two strands into the one cable is as indicated above in this study, the binding of these two strands on the God-ward side in such a way that the true self, or, to use Melville's powerful adjective, the inexorable self, is indeed God-ward.

In Ahab we have the resolution going the other way, that is, resolution does indeed occur, but it occurs on the side of obedience to oneself. We cannot think of Ahab as being passive toward God, however, he must hurl a harpoon at Him. Ahab had tried to resolve the issue on God's side and been repulsed, for in the triad quoted above occur these significant words:

Oh, thou spirit of fire, whom on these seas I as Persian once did worship, till in the sacramental act so burned by thee that to this hour I bear the scar, I know thee now . . .⁴⁴

In Ahab we have an inversion of the sermon's true intention, the sum of which is in Father Mapple's prayer. Ahab, we may assume, would make certain changes in that prayer.

Father Mapple

O Father! chiefly known
to me by Thy rod . . .

mortal or immortal here I die

I have striven to be Thine
more than to be this world's,
or mine own.

Yet this is nothing;

I leave eternity to Thee;

for what is man that he
should live out the lifetime
of his God?

Captain Ahab

By thy rods, God or gods,
I know you are no father . . .

mortal or immortal here I die

I have striven to be Thine
more than this world's but thou
didst strike me, therefore I am
mine own.

Therefore, I am everything;

Eternity is nothing to me;

for what is God that he should
survive the life experience of
a man?

From this perspective, the strands of the sermon and novel, in the one person we have studied, Ahab, are the same. They are resolved in different ways and therefore lead to diverse consequences, but work, nonetheless, on the same subject matter, namely, the individual's struggle to find which of two alternatives will be his: the commands of God or obedience to himself. Father Mapple's potent understatement becomes the story of Ahab's struggle with the universe: ". . . it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists."⁴²

⁴¹Ibid., p. 444. Italics mine. The scar refers to the white mark which Ishmael had first observed cleaving Ahab's visage as he stood on the quarter-deck that first appearance. Cf. p. 108.

⁴²Cf. ante, p. 125, lines 24,25.

III. CRITIQUE

Gospel Content

Redemption. Father Mapple says nothing about the redemption wrought by God in Jesus Christ. The sermon may pre-suppose a mediated relationship between men and God' if so, it remains unstated. "Woe to him whom this world charms from Gospel duty,"⁴³ he says. But since the gospel duty is to obey God rather than men, and since Jonah was at work with this problem before the coming of Christ, that one sentence in the sermon cannot be given enough weight to warrant applying it to the sermon as a whole.

God's love and purpose. The story of Jonah is that of a man who is called by God to perform a task. By the terms of this study, the nature of that task demonstrates God's concern to shape human society according to his purpose. Jonah is a needed instrument. When he rebels, God's intention is thwarted and his divine action regarding Jonah ensues.

While the story of Nineveh is the backdrop to his sermon, Father Mapple is specific in directing the attention of his congregation away from Nineveh and toward Jonah, the disobedient prophet.

As with all sinners among men, the sin of this son of Amittai was in his wilfull disobedience of the command of God--never mind now what that command was, or how conveyed--which he found a hard command.⁴⁴

Later Father Mapple refers to the ministry in Nineveh which Jonah

⁴³Cf. ante, p. 125, lines 24,25.

⁴⁴Cf. ante, p. 125, lines 18-21. Italics mine.

was to perform but, again, the emphasis is upon Jonah's disobedience and God's attention to Jonah rather than the healing of the wickedness of Nineveh.

. . . being an anointed pilot-prophet, or speaker of true things, and bidden by the Lord to sound those unwelcome truths in the ears of wicked Nineveh, Jonah, appalled at the hostility he should raise, fled from his mission, and sought to escape his duty and his God by taking ship at Joppa.⁴⁵

The concern of God for Nineveh and his concern to secure the services of one man to perform his bidding are necessary to the story of Jonah and to the sermon. In short, the sermon declares that God has purposes in the world which require the obedient services of men. Happy is the man who aids God in his purposes, regardless of the difficulty of doing so.

Judgment and mercy. Father Mapple's sermon is unequivocal about judgment. He tells the congregation that Jonah's sin, hard-heartedness and suddenly awakened fears brought swift punishment. The will of God is so clearly known that Jonah can flout it and know that he is running from God and courting punishment. Jonah's guilt in this is described in detail:

Miserable man! Oh! most contemptible and worthy of all scorn; with slouched hat and guilty eye, skulking from his God; prowling among the shipping like a vile burglar hastening to cross the seas. So disordered, self-condemning is his look that had there been policemen in those days, Jonah, on the mere suspicion of something wrong, had been arrested ere he touched a deck. . . . How plainly he's a fugitive!⁴⁶

⁴⁵Cf. ante, p. 129, lines 218-222.

⁴⁶Cf. ante, p. 126, lines 41-47.

The judgment of God pursues Jonah beyond all boundaries, even to the belly of the fish, for, as Father Mapple reminds his congregation,
 ". . . God came upon him in the whale . . ." ⁴⁷

Father Mapple does not intend to leave his hearers in the past; Jonah is an illustration of God's work with all his children. The "hard hand of God" ⁴⁸ is upon all men and we, like Jonah, must hear God's commands. They are not easy. . . . "all the things that God would have us do are hard for us to do . . . and hence, he oftener commands us than endeavors to persuade." ⁴⁹ Even the preacher experiences the dreadful judgments of God: "shipmates, God has laid but one hand upon you; both hands press upon me. . . . for I am a greater sinner than ye." ⁵⁰ Father Mapple's closing prayer begins with a telling line: "O Father, chiefly known to me by Thy rod . . ." ⁵¹

The function of judgment in the sermon is to induce repentance and obedience. Jonah has repented correctly:

Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord out of the fish's belly. But observe his prayer, and learn a weighty lesson. For sinful as he is, Jonah does not weep and wail for direct deliverance. He feels that his dreadful punishment is just. He leaves all his deliverance to God . . . ⁵²

⁴⁷ Cf. ante, p. 126, line 75.

⁴⁸ Cf. ante, p. 128, line 176.

⁴⁹ Cf. ante, p. 125, lines 21-23.

⁵⁰ Cf. ante, p. 129, lines 210-213.

⁵¹ Cf. ante, p. 130, lines 265, 266.

⁵² Cf. ante, p. 129, lines 192-201.

Deliverance from the whale is the proof that Jonah has been accepted by God, consequently, Jonah's subsequent action is taken with delight and all men who accept God's judgment and mercy experience delight.⁵³

Compassion. In the sermon from Moby Dick, God is not described as compassionate but stern and judgmental. Compassion, if it is to be used as a descriptive word for God, must have all sentimentality removed from it. God punishes sinners. Their only hope is repentance and obedience. If man meets the conditions, God is merciful. God's commands are explicit; man either obeys them and is rewarded or is disobedient and is punished.

Mercy is expressed in terms of God's tenacious pursuit of the sinner. God cares enough about Jonah to seek him out. God cares enough for him to punish him. Jonah responds because he cannot escape God. Because punishment is for healing it is compassionate; because judgment does not end in banishment, it is merciful, and confession leads to forgiveness and delight.

The new humanity. It is inaccurate to speak of Father Mapple's ideal man as joined with Christ for the reason that Christ has no place in the sermon. The qualities of life which are pleasing to God, however, are simply and clearly described.

Each of Father Mapple's hearers would recognize that God is pleased with unquestioning obedience to his commands. The difficulty of following them appears to heighten their value, so that along with

⁵³ Cf. ante, p. 130, lines 253-255.

obedience to God goes disobedience to ourselves: "If we obey God, we must disobey ourselves. It is in this disobeying ourselves wherein the hardness of obeying God consists."⁵⁴

Father Mapple's new humanity is characterized by delight as well as obedience:

Delight is to him . . . who against the proud gods and commodores of this earth, ever stands forth his own inexorable self. Delight is to him whose strong arms yet support him, when the ship of this base treacherous world has gone down beneath him. Delight is to him, who gives no quarter in the truth. . . . Delight,--top-gallant delight is to him, who acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord his God, and is only a patriot to heaven . . .⁵⁵

The new humanity of Father Mapple is as resolute and happy as a captain and crew in a stout ship weathering a storm at sea. There is delight in the struggle against great odds; great rewards or great loss are at stake. And instant obedience is a matter of life or death.

Theological Summary

In only one of the five external criteria for the gospel sermon is Father Mapple's sermon deficient; it lacks reference to Christ. The sense of history is present, though not a major theme. The theme of judgment is more dominant than that of mercy in the amount of sermon material devoted to it and the divine compassion is more clear in what it does not permit than in its more positive expressions. The new humanity which is described is characterized by obedience and delight.

While these external standards of the sermon reveal it to be a broadly developed sermon, the singleness of its theme is not lost.

⁵⁴Cf. ante, p. 125, lines 23-25.

⁵⁵Cf. ante, p. 130, lines 252-261.

Man's struggle with the sovereignty of God is the dominant theological problem with which Moby-Dick and the sermon within it deals. This is the single topic of Father Mapple's sermon with its call for repentance and obedience. It is likewise the problem of Ahab. Jonah takes the route of obedience; Ahab that of rebellion. The whale carries Jonah to safety. A whale sends Ahab to his death.

In the sermon God tells Jonah what to do; Jonah's task is to obey. The call is not open for negotiation. It is sovereign and not to be questioned. As Father Mapple makes clear, it is not what is commanded that is at issue but instant obedience to the command itself: "As with all sinners among men, the sin of this son of Amittai was in his wilfull disobedience of the command of God--never mind now what that command was or how conveyed . . ."⁵⁶

Once the topic of man's obedience to God's sovereign command is made clear, all subsequent subject matter is illustrative. The point has been made. The lengthy account of Jonah's experience, while not divided into subheads which state the issues in so many words, can be stated in propositional form: (1) God pursues his chosen servants to the ends of the earth to restore them to useful service;⁵⁷ (2) the very appearance of guilt marks the man who is disobedient to God's call. "So disordered, self-condemning is his look, that had there been policemen in those days, Jonah, on the mere suspicion of something wrong, had been

⁵⁶Cf. ante, p. 125, lines 18-20. Italics mine.

⁵⁷Cf. ante, p. 125-126, lines 26-41.

arrested ere he touched a deck."⁵⁸ (3) Even the belly of the whale provides no release from the call of God;⁵⁹ (4) Jonah's repentance and obedience is the correct example for each of us;⁶⁰ (5) we must all apply the lesson of Jonah to our own condition, starting with the "pilot of the living God," Father Mapple himself.⁶¹ The reason for it all is that God's will is sovereign. We either obey and prosper or disobey and are destroyed.

In the singleness of its message, the clarity of its statement of purpose, the compelling narrative of Jonah, the resolution of the themes of repentance and obedience, the promise of great joy, are the marks of a monumental sermon, despite its strange silence about Christ.

Homiletical Summary

Father Mapple's sermon has particular merit, from a homiletical point of view, in the areas of structure, language, and emotional identity with the congregation.

In structure the sermon is a model of simplicity. Father Mapple begins with a clear statement of purpose and then tells a long story which illustrates it. The inner parts of the story convey the substance of what he wants to say in his chosen topic. The sermon concludes with an application which puts the preacher within the context of the human

⁵⁸ Cf. ante, p. 126, lines 44,45.

⁵⁹ Cf. ante, p. 129, lines 190-209.

⁶⁰ Cf. ante, p. 129, lines 203-209.

⁶¹ Cf. ante, p. 129, line 217.

needs uncovered in the sermon.

The language of the sermon is shaped to the needs of a seafaring congregation. In the telling of Jonah's story we have a tale so well told that it stands by itself as a fascinating narrative. The hearer who is not ready to deal with weightier meanings is not excluded from the sermon. Father Mapple throws out remarks like a fisherman paying out his nets. He introduces his topic by saying:

Shipmates, this book, containing only four chapters--four yarns--is one of the smallest strands in the mighty cable of the Scriptures. Yet what depth of the soul doth Jonah's deep sealine sound! What a pregnant lesson to us is this prophet! What a noble thing is that canticle in the fish's belly! How billowlike and boisterously grand! We feel the floods surging over us; we sound with him to the keply bottom of the waters; seaweed and all the slime of the sea is about us.⁶²

Father Mapple gives sufficient time for the net of his words to settle around the subject matter and around the minds of his hearers. He does so by an extended, even laborious, account of Jonah's flight from God. No detail is spared in describing Jonah's appearance, the crew's reaction to him, the ship's appointments and the captain's character. When the net has reached its widest circumference and deepest level, Father Mapple draws it in and reveals what has been caught. It is this: God pursues those who disobey him until they repent and then he honors that repentance.⁶³

In one respect the sermon is unique among those found in the novels studied here--Father Mapple tells his congregation plainly that he himself stands in need of the truth conveyed in his own sermon. He

⁶²Melville, op. cit., p. 36.

⁶³Ibid., p. 41.

tells them that his words about Jonah have caught them, his congregation, but they have caught him too. "Shipmates, God has laid but one hand upon you; both hands press upon me . . . for I am a greater sinner than ye."⁶⁴ Because Jonah was an "anointed pilot-prophet"⁶⁵ who was told to preach unwelcome truths in the ears of the wicked, God pursued him even in the belly of a whale when he refused to obey. He, Father Mapple, must not run from the similar responsibility to preach the truth about his congregation, nor must they avoid speaking the truth: "Woe to him who seeks to please rather than to appall!"⁶⁶ These sentiments were missing in previous sermons. Shegog, in The Sound and the Fury, makes a sharp distinction between his own state of grace and that of the sinners in his congregation, frankly telling his congregation that he wants them to possess what he has. Father Paneloux, in The Plague, clearly removes himself from his suffering congregation with his opening statement: "Calamity has come on you, my brethren, and, my brethren, you deserved it."⁶⁷ To a greater or lesser degree, each of the previous sermons has maintained this attitude. Father Mapple's people are treated to two rare experiences. The first is a superb sermon; the second is the sight of the preacher kneeling before the truth he has preached. After the sermon "He said no more, but slowly waving a benediction, covered his

⁶⁴Cf. ante, p. 129, lines 210,211; 213.

⁶⁵Melville, op. cit., p. 42.

⁶⁶Cf. ante, p. 130, lines 243,244.

⁶⁷Cf. ante, p. 28, lines 3-9.

face with his hands, and so remained kneeling, till all the people had departed and he was left alone in the place."⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Melville, op. cit., p. 43.

CHAPTER IX

LIE DOWN IN DARKNESS¹

William Styron is self-effacing about one aspect of his work. "I have no conscious illusions," he writes, "about being a teacher or preacher."² He specifically rejects any idea of being a propagandist or a writer with a cause. His critics do not quarrel with that assessment. Maxwell Geismar says of Lie Down in Darkness that it has no message, no moral, and that it achieves its purpose almost perfectly. ". . . it simply records a domestic tragedy."³ This study challenges these judgments as we shall see.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL

Summary

Following a brief introductory sketch in which Negroes working in a pine forest watch a train load of white vacationers flash by, the novel begins with the funeral of Peyton Loftis, a beautiful girl barely out of her teens, who has committed suicide. In the span of her short life, this engaging child-woman receives the doting, almost passionate, affection of her father, Milton Loftis, as well as the frankly

¹William Styron, Lie Down in Darkness (New York: New American Library, 1951).

²William Styron, "Prevalence of Wonders," Nation, CLXXVI (May 2, 1953), 370-71.

³Maxwell Geismar, "William Styron," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXIV (September 15, 1951), 12.

passionate attentions of a succession of lovers. To the end she remains unsated. From one person she receives no affection at all, her mother, Helen Loftis. Socially aloof, yet craving social approval, Helen has fallen heir to a modest fortune. She is the unhappy wife of an inconsequential lawyer-turned-drinker. Her life is devoted to the tender care of her retarded first-born, the violent rejection of her beautiful second child, Peyton, and efforts to reform her husband. None of the goals of Helen's attention is reached: the retarded child dies, her husband does not reform, and Peyton, first in life, then in death, dominates her mother's existence.

The novel traces Peyton's life at home, her stormy adolescence and first marriage, her flight to an arty life in New York, her mental collapse and suicide. The closing scene marks the death of all hope for the individuals surrounding Peyton's life. A concluding sketch matching that of the opening moments of the novel, returns the reader to the Negro community.

Themes

No character in the novel stands alone; each requires the others and each is destroyed by the others. For each there are moments of bright hope as well as despair but the tides are running out and any momentary surges soon withdraw. The tide going out is love.

Milton Loftis had drunk, whored, and talked his way through law school--and made a commendable academic record in the process. He

⁴Styron, Lie Down in Darkness, p. 14.

talked his way into a comfortable post during World War I. He avoided combat, made captain, and married the colonel's daughter. "He loved her, God he loved her."⁴ Nor did he stop loving her. Twenty-three years after his wedding day, with the wreckage of his life about him, a bottle of beer clutched in his hands, his blond companion of many years beside him, and his cherished daughter soon to be buried, he still confesses his love. The Reverend Carey Carr does not believe Milton could love Helen after the agony of the years:

"Get this straight in your mind, Milton. Why do you want her back? You've got to be sure it's not just a reaction to . . . all of this. Why do you want her back? You've got to look into your heart." Loftis said nothing.

.
"Why?"

Loftis thrust his head back into his hands. "Jesus Christ, man, I love her!" He looked up. "I've always loved her. . . ."⁵

Between Helen and Peyton there is hatred and so Peyton cannot grasp the love her father has for her mother:

How could he explain to this child a fact of life he hardly understood himself: a love which had been held together by the merest wisp of music, faintly heard only during unwitting moments when memory washed at their minds like breakers against crumbling stones; a love in which the principals involved might have dwelt at opposite rims of the universe, only to be drawn back always by some force he could never define--the impalpable, thin strand of music, a memory of lost, enfolding arms, or the common recollection of a happening very ordinary, but which had happened to them together⁶

Despite his life-long love, there is no final reconciliation with Helen.

If the love of Milton Loftis for his wife is a dark, groping and unfulfilled affection, that which he shares with his daughter is

⁵Ibid., p. 232.

⁶Ibid., p. 254.

palpable. Peyton, looking back upon it from the perspective of college experiences, observes:

. . . Daddy, I love him so. But he lost me and he doesn't even know it. . . . The dear. I think we've got a Freudian attachment. The dear. He's such an ass. . . .⁷

To Helen the relationship between her husband and her daughter is nauseous. She confides in her pastor:

"Carey," she said, "I wonder what these moments are that come to fetch us off into desperation. . . You see, I'd been on my knees trying not to yield, seeking God's help. Teach me to love, I'd been saying. I remember it all. I thought I could get up from my garden decently, patiently, face those people who've harmed me the most. I'd show love and kindness. But it wasn't just that root, bleeding and ugly as it was; it was something else behind me. Peyton's voice. So undisciplined, so crude. Saying something like, 'Bunny, quit pinching me!' And the way he went on. 'Why, baby, I'm shocked!' and hers again: 'You're mean,' things like that, and the sniggering and giggling back and forth."⁸

At Peyton's wedding, Milton is swept by desire for his daughter:

. . . he saw Peyton, those solid curved hips trembling ever so faintly; he thought desperately, hopelessly, of something he could not admit to himself, but did: of now being above--most animal and horrid, but loving--someone young and dear that he had loved ever since he was child enough to love the face of woman and the flesh, too. Yes, dear God, he thought (and he thought dear God, what am I thinking?) the flesh, too, the wet hot flesh, straining like a beautiful, bloody savage.⁹

As for Peyton, the hunger for love is desperate. From her mother she received no awareness of affection. The only tolerable period was a brief one during Peyton's college years:

During these first several college years, in the summers and during Peyton's vacations, she and Peyton had managed to get together with a minimum of friction: although they seldom wrote to each other, arrivals and departures were solemnized by kisses, they

⁷ Ibid., p. 224.

⁸ Ibid., p. 115.

⁹ Ibid., p. 258.

exchanged small gifts, and in general disguised their feelings, whatever they were, beneath masks of smooth feminine guilelessness.¹⁰

Peyton was not trusted with the slightest care of her retarded sister. This restriction, and a bewildering array of others, reduced Peyton to infantile awkwardness. Whether as a small child or as a college student she repeatedly spilled her glass at the dinner table. In retaliation Peyton took advantage of her mother in public where the chance of parental discipline was diminished.

The culmination of these tensions was reached at Peyton's eighteenth birthday celebration. Her mother accused Peyton of drinking whiskey and ordered her to leave the party. Peyton responded: "I despise you!"¹¹ For Peyton, little remained but to complete the break with her family. When her mother at last realized what she was doing to her daughter it was too late to change.

The effusive affection of her father, the hatred expressed by her mother, bore tragic consequences. Peyton's quest for love brought her many lovers, little love. Nor could she give love:

"Quit talking about getting married, Dick! Quit talking about it. You're selfish about me. And stupid. And if you want to know why I'm like this it's because I don't love you and I never have. Not because of you or anything like that but just because I don't love and I can't love and isn't that too bad. Isn't that too bad, Dick?"¹²

Just how bad it can be to need love and not be able either to receive or give love is the theme of the novel.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 147.

¹¹Ibid., p. 212.

¹²Ibid., p. 224.

II. THE SERMON

Setting

At various points in study the wider field of religion in literature has beckoned. The Plague, for example, invites a closer scrutiny of Father Paneloux than the sermon alone makes possible. That is true of Lie Down in Darkness. Our particular concern for the sermon should not cause us to overlook the sensitive portrayal of the role of the clergy. The Reverend Carey Carr is significantly placed in the novel, though he is shown as an impotent priest so far as his usefulness in bringing healing and reconciliation is concerned. We see him struggling to find the key to the Loftis family's need, to release the best in them and in himself, for their sakes. Father Paneloux declares the gospel through the plague, serves with great vigor, and dies. Carey Carr has nothing to proclaim, wants to serve, but, being unable to decide what to do, watches his people die. His struggle is portrayed in the following:

All the way over to Helen's, indeed the entire morning, the Reverend Carey Carr had been thinking: Poor Helen, poor Helen. That and nothing more, for a predicament, overwhelming and hopeless, such as this one, couldn't be helped by piety, or prayers either; it was the human condition alone that he must minister to, and by flimsy human means, and so it was nothing but poor Helen, poor Helen that he thought, over and over.¹³

For the novel's Negro preacher, Daddy Faith, the rotund, beaming, self-styled presence-of-God-on-earth, no such problem exists. It is his sermon we hear in the novel, not Father Carr's. Father Carr is inept in

¹³Ibid., p. 99.

a situation which partakes too deeply of the human condition; Daddy Faith ladles out comfort like gravy over hot biscuits.

Daddy Faith's sermon is a part of the author's closing vignette. To put it in its proper setting, we should recall the opening sketch in the novel. There Negroes working in the pine forests of Virginia look up to watch a speeding, southbound train pass them on its way to Port Warwick, the setting of the story. At the close of the novel, Negro worshippers at a baptismal service are interrupted in their celebration as a train makes its ponderous way north. The sermon, like the two appearances of the train, has no necessary relation to the course of the novel. It provides a stylistic addition to the story. The sermon and Daddy Faith provide a bright moment in a heavy, emotionally charged denouement.

The juxtaposition of two paragraphs demonstrate this break in the story. The first is taken from the funeral scene at the close of the novel and the second from the baptismal service, the closing sketch of the novel.

Loftis pulled Helen out so that she faced him and began to choke her. "God damn you," he yelled, "if I can't have . . . then you . . . nothing!"

"People!" Carey cried. "People! People!" He couldn't move.

"Die, damn you, die!"

It was over as quickly as it had begun . . . Loftis relaxed his grip on her neck, stood trembling and weeping in the hallway with its fading, ugly light, its smell of dampness and rain and death. Helen slumped against Carey, heavily, without a sound, and distantly within the chapel, where Peyton's body lay, something stirred, moved, a piece of falling slate perhaps, a rain-blown, gutter pipe--who knows?¹⁴

¹⁴Ibid., p. 370.

The scene shifts abruptly to the baptismal scene:

Then it happened, with the sound of a trumpet. A robed, scarlet arm went up, and a single note rang across the water. The arm descended, the curtains parted, and Daddy Faith appeared. The crowd stirred and grinned among themselves, but remained respectfully quiet. There he was; a round tub of a man, as black as black ever could get, dressed, like all the rest, in a simple white robe. He stood at the edge of the raft, smiling, benign, avuncular; . . . Then he spoke. The words were hoarsely spoken, but sweet and soothing, and they poured over the crowd--touching them, palpably, so that one could almost hear the people shudder--like some liquid from paradise, caressing and divine.¹⁵

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 377,378.

SERMON VIII*

1 "Comfort ye." . . .
 2 . . . "Comfort ye." . . .
 3 "Comfort ye, my people!"

 4 "Saith your God."

 5 "Who loves you, my people?"

 6 "Dat's right," . . .
 7 "My, dat's right."

 8 "Dat sho' is right!" . . . "We seen a tough time, my
 9 people" . . . "all dese years. We done had wars and de pesti-
 10 lences and de exiles. We had de plagues and de bondages and de
 11 people in chains. Is'rel has suffered in de land of de pharoahs
 12 and de land of Nebucherezzar. And de people have laid down in de
 13 wildiness and cried out loud: Woe is fo' our hurt, our wound is
 14 grievous, and where is now our hope? Dey shall go down to de bars
 15 of de pit, when our rest together is in the dust. And de people
 16 have wept out loud, My Lawd, my Lawd, why has Thou fo'saken me?
 17 De people have been sore hurt and dey say, our inheritance is
 18 turned to strangers, our fathers have sinned and are not, and we
 19 have bo'n their iniquities. And the people have wished to see de
 20 pure river of de water of life, clear as crystal, proceedin' outen
 21 de throne of God and of de Lamb. Dey stand in de streets of deso-
 22 lation and dey say, Lawd, show me dat revelation where dere shall
 23 be no night and no need fo' candle, neither light of de sun. Show
 24 me dat, Lawd, for our hurt is grievous and our way is fenced up so
 25 we can't pass, and dere is darkness in our paths.
 26 "now de people of Isr'el done gone off to war," . . .
 27 "Now de people done gone off to war and dey sent down de atom bomb

*Full text of a sermon by Daddy Faith in William Styron, Lie Down in Darkness (New York: New American Library, 1951), pp. 378-380.

28 on de Land of de Risin' Sun and de sojers come home wid glory in
 29 dey th'oats and wid timbrels and de clashin' of bells." . . .
 30 "Well, my people, it do seem to me dat we got a long way yet. De
 31 hand of de Lawd is against de sinful and de unjust, and de candle
 32 of de wicked is put out. But mo' time to pass yet and de eyes of
 33 de people shall see His destruction and dey shall drink of de
 34 wrath of d'Almighty. And dey shall see a time of hate and a time
 35 of war, like de preacher said, and dey shall hear de sound of
 36 battle in de land and de great destruction. 'Oh, Lawd,' dey'll
 37 go on and cry still, 'Oh, Lawd, I am oppressed, undertake fo' me!
 38 I mou'n as a dove, my eyes fail wid lookin; upward! Hear my prayer,
 39 Lawd, and let my pryaer come unto Thee! Hear my prayer, Lawd, and
 40 let my prayer come unto Thee! Don't take away my freedom again,
 41 Lawd, don't take away dat!'"

42 "Dey gonna holler 'O God, de proud are risen against me,
 43 and de assemblies of vi'lent men done sought after my soul! How
 44 long, Lawd, wilt Thou be angry fo'ever, shall Thy jealousy burn
 45 like fire?"

.

46 "Comfort ye," . . . "comfort ye, my people. Do you not
 47 know dat I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be
 48 clean, and a new heart also will I give you and a new sperit will
 49 I put widin you? If it were not so I would have told you."

.

50 . . . "Be not afraid, my people. De voice sayd, Cry!
 51 And he said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all de
 52 goodliness thereof is as de flower of de field. De grass withereth
 53 and de flower fadeth, because de sperit of de Lawd bloweth upon
 54 it . . ."

55 "Sho'ly de people is grass."

.

56 . . . "De grass withereth, de flower fadeth," . . .
 57 but de word of your God shall stand forever."

Theme

The theme of the sermon, like that of the novel, is love. "Who loves you, my people?" asks Daddy Faith as he begins his sermon. "You, Daddy Daddy Faith!, You loves us! You, Daddy!" is the instant reply from the congregation.¹⁶ This open expression of love is in sharp contrast to the covered feelings and withheld love discussed in the novel, the utter absence of which is the tragedy of Peyton and her family.

In the sermon it is the pastor's love for his people which guides his summary of past history in Bible times. He is telling his people that they are not the only ones to suffer and they they all need more understanding, more ability to grasp the meaning of God's promises in dark times. Daddy Faith pleads with God for the people who are in his charge; they suffer and he suffers with them. But he wants to understand the meaning of that suffering.

. . . Lawd, show me dat revelation where dere shall be no night and no need fo' candle, neither light of de sun. Show me dat, Lawd, for our hurt is grievous and our way is fenced up so we can't pass, and dere is darkness in our paths.¹⁷

Daddy Faith moves from the biblical period to present day events and shows how oppression continues. He tells the congregation that it is living in the last days.¹⁸ But he reminds them of their faith, that comfort and security will be their inheritance.¹⁹ He closes the sermon

¹⁶Styron, Lie Down in Darkness, p. 378.

¹⁷Cf. ante, p. 156, lines 22-25.

¹⁸Cf. ante, p. 156-157, lines 26-41.

¹⁹Cf. ante, p. 157, lines 42, 57.

as he began it with words of comfort.

The theme of love is even proclaimed in the decor of the baptismal service. Daddy Faith delivers the sermon from a raft which bobs gently offshore in shallow water. The raft was decorated for the occasion with a gaudy curtain.

At the corners of the curtain were tall golden rods, and surmounting each was a transparent globe, through which an electric bulb shone, giving outline to painted red letters, which said simply: LOVE.²⁰

Relation between Sermon and Novel

I noted earlier that there is no necessary structural relationship between the sermon and the novel. The closing vignette in which the sermon appears is a stylistic device.²¹

The thematic relationship between the sermon and the novel is profound. When Daddy Faith prays for a revelation, an understanding of events in the past and present, he is speaking for the Reverend Carey Carr and echoing the prayers of Helen for her family. Their hurt is grievous and there is darkness in the path.²² They know it but can do nothing to relieve it.

Daddy Faith introduces a new theme to the novel, that of hope. He reminds his congregation of God's promise, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, and a new heart also will I give

²⁰Styron, Lie Down in Darkness, p. 374.

²¹Cf. ante, p.

²²Cf. ante, p. 156, lines 22-25.

you and a new spirit . . ."²³ Finally, he tells them not to be afraid because the word of "your God shall stand forever."²⁴

III. CRITIQUE

Gospel Content

Redemption. Nothing in the sermon refers to God's redemptive activity in Christ. The hearers interrupt the sermon with, "Yes Jesus, you loves us!"²⁵ but it is more an ejaculation than a christology.

God's love and purpose. The sermon grows out of a sense of history and identifies its hearers with the events of the past. "We seen a tough time, my people . . . all dese years."²⁶ The difficulties of the past are listed: wars, pestilence, exile, plague, bondage, and chains.²⁷ These experiences are given biblical status. The Negro congregation is called Israel; the national leaders in America are pharaohs.²⁸ The Negro is Jesus on the cross crying, "My Lawd, my Lawd, why has Thou fo'saken me?"²⁹ The Negro is also the suffering servant whose inheritance is given to strangers and who bears the iniquities of others.³⁰

²³Cf. ante, p. 157, lines 47,48.

²⁴Cf. ante, p. 157, line 57.

²⁵Styron, Lie Down in Darkness, p. 378.

²⁶Cf. ante, p. 156, lines 8,9.

²⁷Cf. ante, p. 156, lines 9-11.

²⁸Cf. ante, p. 156, lines 11,12.

²⁹Cf. ante, p. 156, line 16.

³⁰Cf. ante, p. 156, lines 17-19.

God struggles with his people in their history, in Daddy Faith's sermon.

Judgment and mercy. Daddy Faith moves from a sketch of the past to a seer's view of the future. The turning point between past and future is the atom bomb:

Now de people of Isr'el done gone off to war . . . Now de people done gone off to war and dey sent down de atom bomb on de Land of de Risin' Sun and de sojers come home wid glory in dey th'oats and wid timbrels and de clashin' of bells.³¹

This moment of glory is transitional, however, for the preacher follows it with: "Well, my people, it do seem to me dat we got a long way yet."³² The long way is expressed in judgment. God is against the sinful and unjust; destruction and the wrath of the almighty are to come; hate and war will certainly come.³³ The worst of it is that hard-won freedoms may be lost: "Hear my prayer, Lawd, and let my prayer come unto Thee! Don't take away my freedom again, Lawd, don't take away dat!"³⁴ All these judgments against men come because of sin:

De hand of de Lawd is against de sinful and de unjust, and de candle of de wicked is put out. But mo' time to pass yet and de eyes of de people shall see His destruction and dey shall drink of de wrath of d'Almighty.³⁵

³¹Cf. ante, pp. 156-157, lines 26-29.

³²Cf. ante, p. 157, line 30.

³³Cf. ante, p. 157, lines 33-36.

³⁴Cf. ante, p. 157, lines 40,41.

³⁵Cf. ante, p. 157, lines 31-34.

While the judgment of God is made clear in the content of the sermon, the mercy of God is evoked by the very presence of Daddy Faith. It is not stated.

Compassion. The opening words of the sermon convey the compassionate note of the sermon. It is not lost in any part. "Comfort ye . . . Comfort ye. . . . Comfort ye, my people! . . . Saith your God."³⁶

The closing words of the sermon speak with the same consolation:

. . . there was a vast sorrow, one somehow proud and proper and just, in his voice, as he spread his arms to heaven and lifted his round face toward the dusk. "Be not afraid, my people. . . ."³⁷

Compassion is in the mood of the sermon, more than in its substance. More divine favor than divine help is apparent.

The new humanity. The closing paragraphs of the sermon describe the quality of life which God's people are to demonstrate:

Do you not know dat I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, and a new heart also will I give you and a new sperit will I put widin you? If it were not so I would have told you.³⁸

A new heart and a new spirit are not enduring. Something greater than that remains--the word of God. The people are to be unafraid.³⁹ They also are subject to death. "All flesh is grass, and all de goodliness thereof is as de flower of de field. . . . Sho'ly de people is grass."⁴⁰ This temporary character of life is acceptable because "de

³⁶Cf. ante, p. 156, lines 1-4.

³⁷Styron, Lie Down in Darkness, p. 380.

³⁸Cf. ante, p. 157, lines 46-49. ³⁹Cf. ante, p. 157, line 58.

⁴⁰Cf. ante, p. 157, lines 51-52.

word of your God shall stand forever."⁴¹

The new humanity is pure of heart, unafraid and subject to the power of God's word.

Theological Summary

The identity of God in the sermon is somewhat ambivalent. Daddy Faith seems at first to declare that he himself is deity. No one appears to object.

"Comfort ye, my people!"
Then he struck himself on the breast with the flat of his hand. This . . . seemed a gesture not so much lordly or pompous as merely fitting, self-evident and in perfect harmony with his benevolent grin . . . "Saith your God."⁴²

Even before the sermon began, the congregation had been prepared to receive deity.

. . . a trumpet sounded . . . one loud clear note . . . and the band, twenty or thirty male musicians in bright scarlet robes, strode down the beach . . .

.
A man appeared. It was not Daddy Faith. It was his major domo, announcer, Gabriel . . . His robe was blue, caught tight at the neck like a vestment . . . "Lift up your head, O . . . ye . . . gates!" he cried. There was a pause. The voice . . . orotund, massive, absolute, like the sound of thunder . . .

"Who is this King of Glory?"

.
Then Ella said it--the first--shrieked it aloud, her arms flung up to the dusk, her eyes rolling toward heaven. "Daddy Faith!" she yelled. "Daddy Faith! Oh, yes, Jesus, He de King of glowry!"
"43

Within the sermon Daddy Faith adjusts easily to being a mere man. He prays for understanding of the ways of God with men. By the time he

⁴¹Cf. ante, p. 157, line 57.

⁴²Styron, Lie Down in Darkness, p. 378.

⁴³Ibid., p. 376.

has reached his conclusion, however, he is again lifted up and can assume his former role. "He quieted them again with a single wave of his hand, tapped himself gently on the chest, and smiled. 'De grass withereth, de flower fadeth,' he said, 'but de word of your God shall stand forever.'"⁴⁴

While the person of deity seems in some doubt, the troubles of man are beyond question. He suffers and is not sure why. His difficulty is of long standing and the ages have seen no relief, nor is there a prospect for better conditions without the action of God. God speaks comfort to his people in the midst of their woes and offers them a new heart and a new spirit.

Homiletical Summary

The sermon by Daddy Faith is in the character of a folk sermon. It is simple, it speaks within the life experience and Biblical heritage of the hearer. Affection and understanding flow between Daddy Faith and his congregation. He translates their feelings into words and weaves the Biblical phrasing into current events.

Now de people of Isr'el done gone off to war. Now de people done gone off to war and dey sent down de atom bomb on de Land of de Risin' Sun and de sojers come home wid glory in dey th'oats and wid timbrels and de clashin' of bells.⁴⁵

There is no time barrier between Daddy Faith and Moses. Israel and Daddy Faith's congregation are interchangeable, as are presidents and pharaohs, slavery in the United States, and the captivity in Babylon. All relationships are vertical, even that with Daddy Faith,

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 380.

⁴⁵Cf. ante, pp. 156-157, lines 26-29.

for he is more than human to his congregation.

This placing of his congregation within the biblical narratives gives dignity to them and meaning to their daily experience. Thus, when Daddy Faith begins this sermon with assurance and comfort, moves to exploration of human longings which remain unfulfilled and closes with promises of better things to come, his congregation moves with him.

CHAPTER X

THE NOVELIST AS PREACHER

In this study I have taken the sermons by novelists seriously, assuming that when the novelist has used the sermon as a device for telling his story he has chosen it as the best means available to him. I have applied to these sermons a statement made about the work of Sophocles, "when a critic can improve a play of Sophocles", he may be sure that he is only giving it a turn that Sophocles has already rejected."¹ Careful study of each sermon has revealed that the authors have done their work with precision.

There is much to be learned about preaching which these sermon writing novelists can teach. It is the purpose of this summary chapter to discuss what the study of these eight sermons may reveal as helpful for the preacher today.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

One of the most instructive results of the survey of sermons in novels is the discovery of the importance which the novelist places upon events which surround the sermon, particularly preparatory events.

Preparation for the Sermon

The sermons in novels have a degree of freedom in developing a

¹Quenton Anderson and Joseph A. Mazzeo (eds.), The Proper Study, Essays on Western Classics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962), p. 80.

setting for the sermon which a preacher may covet. The authors studied here make great use of that freedom and the sermon is clearly the culmination of many events which contribute to its effectiveness. The preparations for the sermon by Daddy Faith in Lie Down in Darkness are somewhat more colorful than others but typical of the way in which novelists introduce sermons. The Negro population had been preparing for the event of Daddy Faith's baptismal service for weeks. The excitement was only slightly interrupted by the untimely death of Peyton Loftis whose funeral fell on the same day as the baptism. The Negro servants in the Loftis household attended the baptism rather than the funeral. A high state of jubilation prevailed even as the people rode by bus to the service.

One old woman near the back door became prematurely hysterical, began to wail and to clutch rapturously at the walls, until the driver slowed down and, standing up, told her to quit it, because she was ringing the bell.²

The expectations of the people were well rewarded. A band played, the people sang familiar spirituals and responded spontaneously to the call to worship given by Gabriel.

. . . Ella gazed at the raft, again with the look of peace and mystery. There was a flutter behind the curtain, a quiet gasp from the crowd, and a man appeared at the edge of the raft. It was not Daddy Faith. It was his major domo, announcer, Gabriel, chief lieutenant: a personage with a stern, muscular face, and glassy, bulging eyes. He seemed to come from finer, rarer stock, with his aquiline profile, both views of which he displayed without modesty, almost contemptuously, and with his thin, straight-lipped mouth. . . . His robe was blue, caught tight at the neck like a vestment; above his heart, embroidered on the robe against his hard, visibly muscular chest, was a silver escutcheon of obscure design. He stood for

²William Styron, Lie Down in Darkness (New York: New American Library, 1951), p. 372.

perhaps a minute, stock-still except for his arrogant, turning head, on astonishing display; a small breeze came up, flicking the hem of his robe. The raft rocked gently. Then he raised his arms slowly from his sides.

"Lift up your heads, O . . . ye . . . gates!" he cried.³

The appearance of Daddy Faith was in marked contrast. He was dressed in a simple white robe and offered quiet comfort.⁴ Behind him were displayed appropriate if somewhat bizarre liturgical symbols, suited to the occasion and the taste of the congregation. Every aspect of the events prior to the sermon had been arranged to give maximum import to the sermon and the preacher.

The Worshipers' Point of View

Setting, however, is more than the arranging of events or the location of objects. It is a matter of sensing the situation, the life condition, of the hearer. The novelists appear to write from the perspective of the pew and are drawn to describe the aspects of the preaching situation which are of importance to the hearer.

In the one novel written by a pastor, whose foil is the wife of the pastor in the novel,⁴ we have the only mention of the season of the liturgical year, the scripture lesson, the litany, and the statement that the sermon did not follow the mental preparation of the people. Traditional liturgical references, so important to the pastor, are not mentioned in the other seven sermons or their settings. This is the case even in the sermons by Roman Catholic priests, Father Arnall and Father Paneloux. In The Plague, Father Paneloux is described in some

³Ibid., pp. 375, 376.

⁴Ibid., pp. 377, 378.

detail, not only as to his physical appearance but also as to his scholarly pursuits and general reputation in Oran. And the weather plays a curious part in the setting of the sermon; the first sermon in The Plague is delivered to the accompaniment of a rainstorm, the second a violent wind.⁵

The hearer's way of life as well as his interest in peripheral details in the acts of worship is a further consideration in the sermons from novels. The folk sermons are given in the vernacular of the congregation, even if the preacher demonstrates his ability to speak to different racial groups, as is the case with Rev'un Shegog.⁶ It is important for the preacher to speak the language of the people. Father Mapple uses the idiom of the sailor. Father Paneloux leaves his scholarly pursuits to develop a sermon specifically for his congregation in their time of need, blending scholarship and home-truths.⁷

The hearer's idiom is also a matter of his life condition, not only a matter of his use of language. The sermons are addressed, then, to sinners who need repentance, to racial groups experiencing oppression, to a white congregation guilty of racial discrimination. One has the feeling that only the sermon by Pastor Svensson is delivered to a status quo situation; the others meet an unusual point of interest in the life of the congregation.

⁵ Albert Camus, The Plague (New York: Knopf, 1964), n. 84.

⁶ William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Random House, 1946), p. 311.

⁷ Camus, op. cit., p. 84.

II. THE CONTENT OF SERMONS

Each of the sermons discussed in this study was evaluated as to gospel content, theology and homiletic. The study of these aspects of the sermon is not only instructive to the pastor seeking better methods of communicating the gospel; it also displays the extent to which the novelist grasps the issues which are vital to the church.

The Gospel Content of Sermons

It is a complicated task to state the gospel content of sermons without doing serious violence to the author's intention. Much is conveyed in the mood of the novel and this may be found in the context of the sermon as well as within its text. The summary which follows necessarily excludes these elements. It indicates the relative adequacy of the sermon as to its gospel content. For purposes of ready comparison, I have charted the sermons in the order of their appearance in this study according to the name and title given the preacher in the novel; evaluated the gospel content according to the five topics used in this chapter of the study; and assigned evaluative terms which indicate whether the particular topic is emphasized, stated, implied, or not stated.

In the chart below it is apparent that certain aspects of the gospel received more attention in the sermons in novels than other aspects. The redemptive activity of God in Jesus Christ was emphasized in but one sermon; it was not stated in five; and, given a minor place in two. God's love toward men and his purpose in history was emphasized in four, not stated in three, and implied in one. Five of the sermons

	Redemption	Purpose	Judgment and Mercy	Compassion	The New Humanity	Total
Elder Grimes	3	3	3	2	2	13
Father Paneloux	0	3	3	3	2	11
Rev'un Shegog	2	0	2	3	2	9
Father DeLavery	0	1	0	1	2	4
Pastor Svensson	0	0	0	1	2	3
Father Arnall	2	0	3	3	2	10
Father Mapple	0	3	3	0	2	8
Daddy Faith	0	3	3	3	2	11
Total	7	13	17	16	16	

emphasized the content of the gospel which Davis terms as God manifesting at once his judgment and mercy; two left it unstated; and, one stated this topic. The new relationship of compassion is emphasized in four instances, stated in one, not stated in one, and implied in two. It is clear that the quality of the life which is pleasing to God, or the new humanity of which Davis speaks, occupies a middle ground in the sermons, being stated in each, emphasized in none.

The most striking fact to come from this analysis is the lack of an adequate Christology in any of the sermons. The one sermon which emphasizes the place of Christ is that of Gabriel Grimes and we recall that the sermon, upon analysis, offered a hope that was no hope. Only in the formal sense did it possess a doctrine of redemption. The sermons do not see God redeeming men through his acts in Jesus Christ. In Camus, the plague becomes the redemptive event. In Faulkner, personal religious exaltation is salvation. In Gilden the emphasis is entirely on works of righteousness. Pastor Svensson offers no redemptive action of any kind. Father Arnall places the act of confession in the central place, not the act of God in Christ. Father Mapple puts obedience in the place of Christ. And Daddy Faith is all the God his people need.

The sermons are strongest in the judgment-with-mercy category, with the weight falling on the judgment side. There is a profound sense that there is something wrong within each individual which he is responsible to change. The wrong is to be punished and change made. The sermons are less clear that God's mercy is present within these processes.

The place of the new humanity, those who have done what the sermon has requested, is also significantly strong, but none of the sermons

deals in more than a cursory way with the qualities of life which mark the Christian. That there is a new humanity is stated, that is all. We may infer that the Christian's way of life differs from that of his un-Christian neighbor; the novels do not deal with the change. The inescapable conclusion one reaches is that the level of expectation for an actual change for the better is exceedingly low.

The basis of the relationship between God and man is compassion according to the definition operative in this study. Gabriel Grimes' sermon is moderately strong in this category, though judgment so far outweighs mercy that there is little feeling of compassion in the sermon despite the number of words which are used as a formal declaration of it. The folk sermons by Shegog and Daddy Faith are the strongest in the total sense of compassion. Their sermons have much to say about unjust oppression; God's grace is compensatory and makes this oppression endurable. God is unfailingly loving toward the sinner whatever the demands made upon him for repentance (Shegog) or baptism (Daddy Faith). Fathers Arnall and Paneloux speak strongly of God as a compassionate being, however the words used to convey God's love take on meanings which would not be allowed in common talk. Father Arnall insists that God loves the sinner, but this assurance comes after many pages of precise description of the torture which he inflicts on the sinner. Compassion, then, does not seem to be the operative basis of the relationship, but judgment. Father Paneloux insists that the plague which slays is also the instrument of healing and should be a token of God's love. The proclaiming of compassion does not, of itself, constitute an assurance of compassion on the part of the hearer. Thus, with the exception

of the folk sermons, compassion is largely formal in the sermons from novels.

Theology of the Sermons

The God-man relationship or the man-man relationship dominate the sermons from novels. There is no God-man-world relationship, or God-man-society, or God-man-neighbor relationship.

The God of all the sermons is judgmental. He is not concerned with the actual life condition of the people. A vertical relationship is broken and must be restored. Thus, Gabriel Grimes fears the pimps and whores of Harlem. They can lead his sons into sin. The answer is forgiveness for the sin of yielding to temptation. A change in social or economic condition is undreamed of as a matter for the action of God in the world. Shegog and Daddy Faith address their congregations as though heaven and hell are the only realities. Nothing said relates the hearer to the world of his daily experience, except in terms of endurance and potential future deliverance. Father DeLavery, on the other hand, deals with his congregation as though there were no God. Social conditions are to be changed, brothers are to be treated as brothers, and we must do something to expiate our sins against those we have wronged, but there is no word in the sermon which indicates a divine imperative in this transaction; it is horizontal only. The only function of daily experience for Pastor Svensson is that it is the arena of temptation. Father Paneloux says that spiritual problems, that is, matters of relationship between men and God, are the providential cause of the plague; God wants men to love him more. Father Arnall, like

Deacon Grimes, sees the world as a sinful place to be escaped at all costs. And Father Mapple talks about whales and men, but not as living whales and living men, but as representatives of malevolent reality and of free choice. In none of the sermons is the daily activity of members of the congregation given value before God, nor their work for a better world related to the purposes of God in the world.

The weight of evidence demonstrates that the sermons are primarily concerned with the souls of men. Conventional reality is not taken seriously.

Homiletical Significance of the Sermons

The first impression one receives upon reading the sermons from novels is that they are brief and powerful. There are no wandering thoughts, no spare words, no topics left dangling. Every sentence is related specifically to the subject of the sermon and no more than two propositions are made regarding the subject which has been chosen. We may assume that one of the reasons for the brevity of sermons in novels is the need to keep the action of the novel moving. Yet the authors have clearly taken whatever time is necessary for the sermon to say what they intended. In general, the sermons are complete.

Without exception the sermons deal with one major topic and develop that topic by narrowing it. Gabriel Grimes calls for obedience to God. Within that topic he develops two propositions. The first is that the saint must never cease to tremble and obey God; the second is that sinners need to repent and begin obeying Him. Father Paneloux takes as his general topic the act of God which is the plague in Oran. He asks

his congregation to accept the plague as a token from God causing them to think again of eternal values. The body of the sermon is a series of illustrations as to how plagues were given by God and useful to his people in past times. Rev'un Shegog asks whether his hearers have the assurance of personal salvation. The sermon puts this question in a variety of ways. Father DeLavery leads his people from a general topic, brotherhood, to the single rhetorical question, what can we do to atone for our sins against our brothers. Pastor Svensson takes temptation as his subject and makes the point that it is easy to fall. Father Arnall's subject is repentance and his method is that of inducing fear by means of detailed descriptions of Hell. Father Mapple takes obedience to God as his topic and through the story of Jonah tells his congregation that they should not sin, but if they do, repent like Jonah did. Daddy Faith embodies the comfort which he tells the congregation is due them from God.

The simplicity and directness of the sermons make it possible for the hearers to be led quickly to the heart of the idea which the preacher is expounding.

The style of communication is of great importance to the novelist. The sermon is an event. The preacher has interest as a personality. The sermons from novels are, therefore, more than collections of ideas around a topic or thoughts to be shared on Sunday by harried church administrators. One feels the attempt on the part of the novelist to communicate the essential character of the preacher through the sermon. Deacon Grimes is young and eager to prove himself. He comes to the occasion of his sermon after much fasting and prayer. The

atmosphere is charged with excitement and expectation. Grimes delivers the sermon with a rapid and energetic style which leaves him sweating and exhausted. Father Paneloux launches his first sentence with the force of a physical blow. Then he pauses, appears to change the subject, and the remainder of the sermon never rises to the power of the very first sentence. It ends reflectively after the people had thought he was finished. Later the people realized that the entire sermon was compressed into its first sentence; the remainder, scholarly as it was, was illustration. Shegog is a performer, the more effective because he has the appearance of a farm hand. He speaks briefly but adds weight to his words by the magnificence of his voice and by physically acting out the feelings which his words are designed to evoke in the hearer. Father DeLavery does not overpower his congregation, but speaks to them in a deprecating, off-hand manner. One senses immediacy of communication in the absence of any contriving to appear like a leader. The sermon exactly matches his public presence. It understates crucial issues, is given without frills, blithely offends the hearer and leaves him with an explosive topic and a heavy question to ponder. Of the preachers described, only Pastor Svensson is bland. His candor about what it means to be tempted lets his congregation know that he is fully acquainted with temptation. While this is mildly shocking to them, the over-all impression is that he is anxious to please. Father Arnall is an old man with a pale, drawn face and a voice broken with phlegm. His sermon draws effect from the fear he himself inspires as the epitome of the implacable, humorless Irish schoolmaster who has absolute authority over the boys in his care, and is a Jesuit. His sermon is delivered

with slight inflection. Its power lies in its patient and precise descriptions of the exquisite tortures of hell. Father Mapple is in character with his congregation--a ruddy seaman despite advanced years with a voice like the rumble of thunder. He is a great storyteller, utterly devout. By turning the demands of the sermon back upon himself, great force is added to the demands which the sermon makes of the sinners who came to hear him. Daddy Faith is a bright and shiny bauble of a man oozing joy and confidence who pours out comfort even as he proclaims it. For the most part, each sermon is of a piece with the preacher. That is not so with Shegog who appears to gain stature by the contrast between his appearance and his sermon. The impact grows with the identification of the man with the sermon.

The homiletical principles which are present in the sermons appear to be the following:

1. The sermon presents one topic and narrows it to one or two propositions.
2. The sermon is an event. At its best it requires a situation which is out of the ordinary.
3. The sermon is an extension of the preacher. He shares himself, not simply a collection of ideas.
4. The style of sermon development and the identification of the preacher with the subject matter, and with the congregation hearing him, determines the level of communication, not the range of ideas or the accuracy of doctrine.

The Novelists' Views of the Sermon

The authors' accounts of the effect of the sermons on their hearers is humbling for the church. Elder Grimes' sermon, while adequate as a proclamation of the gospel, is placed in a novel which declares that the promised redemption makes no change in the actual condition of the believer. Father Paneloux delivers a sermon which is deserving of the highest praise for homiletical development and gospel content. It conveys an attitude toward the condition of modern man which is rejected by the author. Rev'un Shegog offers the consolation of the gospel but it is not heard by the family who needs it and is grasped and appreciated by the person who least needs it. Father DeLavery builds the sermon around his city's concerns, applying the story of Cain and Abel to the racial crisis in Southern America in the late 1940's. The sermon contributes to the impending collapse of relationships between the white and Negro communities in which it is delivered. Pastor Svensson preaches on temptation; describing how easy it is for one to fall from grace, he does so. Father Arnall compels a young man's confession and radical reformation of life. Subsequently, by rejecting the claims of the sermon and the church, he finds his purpose in life. Father Mapple calls for repentance and closes the sermon by offering prayers as a penitent at his own altar. The central figure in Moby Dick rejects the alternative described in the sermon, choosing to fight God rather than submit to him.

⁸Styron, op. cit., p. 379.

Daddy Faith's prophetic remark to his congregation is instructive regarding the effect of sermons: "Well, my people, it do seem dat we got a long way yet."⁸

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